Cricket Fourth Test: South Africa v England

England enjoy a rare good run

Mike Selvey in Port Elizabeth

WITH 1995 already deep in hyperspace and the underlying state of the England team still problematic, it is important to reflect on just what has been achieved in the past 12 months.

A year ago in Sydney, England went into the third Test after maulings in Brisbane and Melbourne with their confidence as tattered as the burst spinnakers in the Sydney-Hobart yacht race. Things, it would be fair to say, were at a low ebb.

What a difference a year makes. Starting at the SCG, where they came within a whisker of victory, England played a total of 13 Tests, winning in Adelaide and then beating West Indies at Lord's and Old Trafford last summer.

Against that they lost three times: convincingly, to a superior side, in Perth; horribly at Headingley; and unfortunately, given the appalling conditions presented to both sides, at Edgbaston. The other seven games were drawn.

Within these bare statistics, however, there are signs of stability. Last Saturday's draw here, the fourth of a series hit by weather, means that Atherton's men have now gone seven Tests without defeat. It is 14 years since England last enjoyed such a run.

That record compares favourably with the previous 12 months when in the same number of Tests — against West Indies, New Zealand, South Africa and Australia — they won the same number of games, three, but were beaten in twice as many, six. The obvious conclusion is that although England are not yet a team able to storm citadels — of the modern Australia or the erstwhile West Indies — they are a damned sight harder to beat.

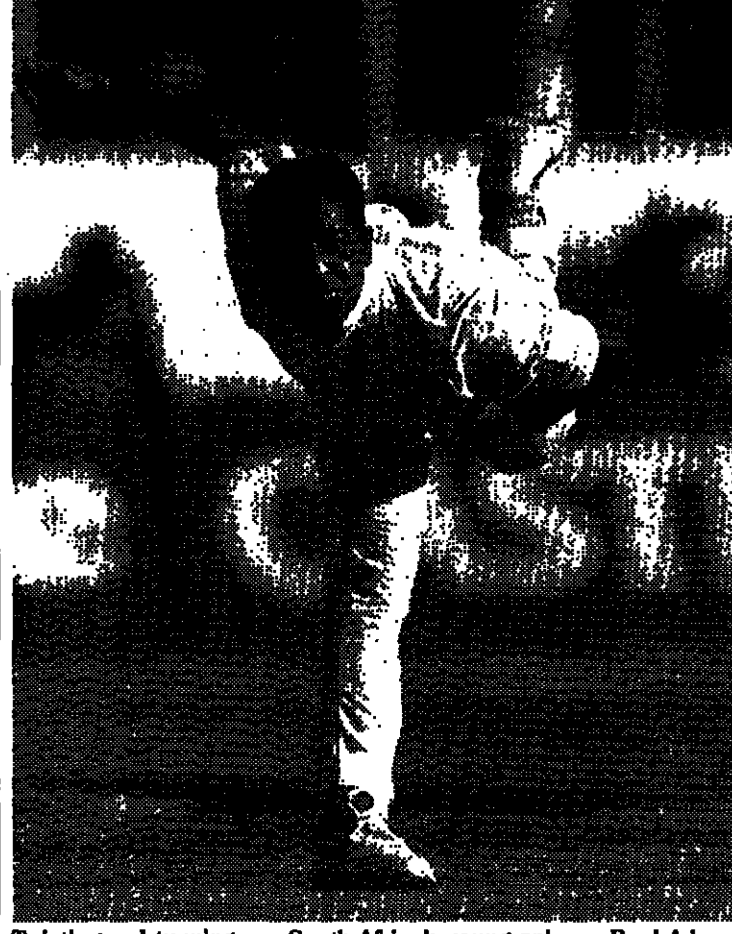
As the current series is showing, that buys time: avoid defeat when not at your peak and you survive to play well another day. And when you do that often enough it becomes a habit every bit as much as does losing.

Some of the credit for this harder attitude goes to Raymond Illingworth. The England manager is not the supreme master of psychology he believes himself to be — his philosophy is stick-oriented in a carrot-free zone — but despite some odd selections and antipathies he has helped inject toughness into elements of the side.

More credit goes to Atherton, the man at the sharp end. He has led England in 28 consecutive Tests now, and lost 10. But four of the defeats came in his first seven matches; six defeats in 21 subsequent matches sounds much more respectable. "We have to become harder to beat," has been his clarion call.

In his own way, never more vividly illustrated than in his rearguard at The Wanderers, he has shown what is possible. And though it would be good to see the team do it without the captain having to show the way, his colleagues are beginning to respond.

Here Atherton had the sort of game with the bat that has served not only to blunt the South Africa attack all series but, perhaps, to make them wonder if they are quite as good as they make themselves out to be. Twice now, in Johannesburg and here at St George's Park, England have gone into the final day faced with the probability of defeat and instead have lost a total of four wickets. Not only has defeat been avoided, this has been managed with ease.



Twisting and turning . . . South Africa's young spinner Paul Adams in action on his Test debut PHOTOGRAPH: CLIVE MASON

Scoreboard

SOUTH AFRICA
First innings
A C Hudson c Russell b Cork
G Kirsten c Thorpe b Illott
*W J Cronje c Atherton b Martin
D J Cullinan c Russell b Cork
J N Rhodes c Smith b Cork
B N McMillan c Russell b Illingworth
†D J Richardson c Russell b Illingworth
S M Pollock lbw b Cork
C R Matthews st Russell b Illingworth
A A Donald not out
P R Adams run out
Extras (lb11, nb8)
Total (159.5 overs)

Bowling: Cork 43.2-12-113-4; Illott 29.4-7-82-1; Martin 33-9-79-1; Illingworth 39.5-8-105-3; Hick 12-1-32-0; Gallian 2-0-6-0.

ENGLAND
First innings
*M A Atherton c Richardson b Adams
A J Stewart c Richardson b Pollock
J E R Gallian c Cullinan b Pollock
G P Thorpe c Rhodes b Adams
G A Hick lbw b Donald
R A Smith lbw b McMillan
†R C Russell c Cullinan b Donald
D G Cork c Richardson b Pollock
R K Illingworth c Hudson b Donald
P J Martin b Adams
M C Illott not out
Extras (lb9, w1, nb9)
Total (120.4 overs)

Bowling: Donald 25.4-7-49-3; Pollock 22-6-58-3; Adams 37-13-75-3; Matthews 20-7-42-0; McMillan 15-6-30-1; Cronje 1-1-0-0.

SOUTH AFRICA
Second innings
A C Hudson c Russell b Martin
G Kirsten c Illingworth b Martin
*W J Cronje c Russell b Martin
D J Cullinan st Russell b Illingworth
J N Rhodes lbw b Cork
B N McMillan c Hick b Cork
†D J Richardson c Russell b Cork
S M Pollock c Cork b Illingworth
C R Matthews c & b Illingworth
A A Donald not out
P R Adams not out
Extras (b8, lb7, w1, nb3)
Total (for 9 dec, 65.3 overs)

Bowling: Cork 26.3-5-63-3; Martin 17-8-39-3; Illingworth 22-7-45-3.

ENGLAND
Second innings
*M A Atherton lbw b Matthews
A J Stewart c Hudson b Donald
J E R Gallian lbw b Adams
G P Thorpe not out
G A Hick not out
Extras (b8, lb9, w1, nb5)
Total (for 3, 92 overs)

Bowling: Pollock 10-4-16-0; Donald 19-4-60-1; Adams 28-13-51-1; McMillan 14-6-16-0; Matthews 10-29-1; Kirsten 2-1-1-0.

Cryptic crossword by Shed

Across

Get wind of a boisterous decade? (7,7)
Many returning weary from desert (5)
Draw conclusion about city of less eminence (8)
Largely shunning innovation; like the sister (7)
12 One causing breach in accountant's affliction (7)
13 Ruler turning on a man of faith (5)
15 Renewed grant to tame the Shrew (9)
17 Expert and apprentice break lock, leaving no clue (9)
20 Insist on publicity (5)
21 I turn green before whirling (7)
23 Working man absorbing one of one's dreams (7)
25 National rave-up in disarray (8)
26 A blow adding nothing to battle (5)
27 Unfortunate lapse, on one occasion, in War of the French Department (5,9)

Down

1 It's rewarding for king bird (home-grown) to receive queen (12)
2 Protective gear in front of the curtain (5)
3 For certain, it will get complicated (9)
4 Flan, unopened, in great place to buy a ticket (7)
5 One with authority to bid about 99 (7)
6 Bust of model (approximately) (5)
7 Find innocent creature following one into the river (9)
10 Badge of the Mediterranean hybrid (7,5)
14 Flights go round it, it's said, to apply careful scrutiny (9)
16 It may be upset, but is fit to carry suspicious parcel (5,4)
18 Say nothing to boy about Pole's self-obsession (7)
19 Victim of initial confusion to trail round bearing (7)
22 Get used to being in flower (5)
24 True centre of Roman Empire (5)

Last week's solution

Sporting Honours

A dream year for Edwards

Don Beet

THE world-record triple-jumper Jonathan Edwards is as thrilled with his MBE, awarded in the New Year Honours List, as he was with his other achievements over a remarkable year.

The modest man from Gateshead — and son of a Devon vicar — who was recently named BBC Television's Sports Personality of the Year after his exploits at last year's world championships, said of his award: "I'm thrilled. It's a great honour.

"Outside of actual athletics this achievement, along with winning the BBC award, has been one of my dreams. Now it has come true and I have got both of them."

Dermot Reeve is never lost for words and after being awarded an OBE the talented cricket captain and mimic said: "I'm flattered but Warwickshire's successes over the past couple of years are not just down to me."

More honour came Warwickshire's way when their former player Alan Smith, chief executive of the Test and County Cricket Board, was given a CBE for his services as an administrator.

Shaun Edwards, the Wigan, England and Great Britain captain awarded the OBE, said: "I don't know how deserving I am of it but obviously I'm very pleased."

The former Lions team-mates Dean Richards and Robert Jones are made MBEs for their services to Rugby Union. Jones said: "I am as delighted with this as any achievement on the pitch."

Another Welshman similarly honoured, the Liverpool striker Ian Rush, said: "I remember Kenny Dalglish getting his and thinking it was great even to know someone who had received one."

Karen Dixon, a member of Britain's three-day event team, thought she might have to wait until after the Olympic Games in Atlanta, where she will compete on the veteran Get Smart, for "anything like an MBE". The 31 year-old from County Durham said: "I'm thrilled but a little surprised."

Nine years after his MBE the 43-year-old motorcycle champion Joey Dunlop receives an OBE for breaking Mike Hailwood's record for Isle of Man TT wins. Another OBE goes to Kendra Slawinski, England's former netball captain.

Ted Lowe, the quiet voice of snooker, broke out of whispers to say of his MBE: "I am delighted."

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UK bows to pressure over dissident

Seumas Milne and Ian Black

THE British government last week bowed to pressure from the Saudi regime, the United States government and British arms companies when it ordered the deportation of Saudi Arabia's most prominent dissident to a tiny Caribbean island.

Mohammed al-Mas'ari, leader of the influential London-based Islamic opposition group, the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights — who last year applied for political asylum in Britain — was given 10 days to appeal against his removal to Dominica, or report to Gatwick airport on January 19.

Mr Mas'ari, who escaped from Saudi Arabia via Yemen, was told by the Home Office that his application was being refused "without substantive consideration" and that Edison James, the prime minister of the former British colony of Dominica, had agreed to give him asylum.

News of Mr Mas'ari's deportation order came on the day the Foreign Office announced that Andrew Green, currently in charge of Middle East policy in London, has been appointed British ambassador in Riyadh — reflecting the pivotal nature of the Saudi relationship.

Mr Mas'ari's removal would be an enormous relief to the Foreign Office, which has found his presence in Britain an embarrassment in relations with Saudi Arabia, a key export market and political ally in the region.

In recent months the question of what to do with him has become an obsession for senior mandarins as British businessmen were repeatedly warned of sanctions by Saudi Arabia if action were not taken. King Fahd is understood to have personally demanded Mr Mas'ari's expulsion when the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, was in Riyadh last November. British-owned multinationals such as Vickers and British Aerospace told the Government it must act or face a devastating toll in lost contracts.

The latest move to get rid of Mr Mas'ari was greeted with outrage by human rights and Middle East campaigners.



Mohammed al-Mas'ari, vociferous critic of the Saudi regime, threatened with deportation to Dominica PHOTO: GRAHAM TURNER

The British deportation order against Saudi Arabia's most prominent dissident will be challenged in the courts, human rights and political leaders pledged, after a government minister admitted the decision had been taken to protect relations with the kingdom.

But the Government appeared ready to brazen out the controversy with its unqualified confirmation that the expulsion was primarily aimed at maintaining good relations with the oil-rich Saudis.

The Home Office minister, Ann Widdecombe, denied that there had been any "blackmailing pressure", but said the Government had had representations from Riyadh and "people in British business" about Mr Mas'ari, who was "complicating our relations with the Saudis".

"If people come here and use our hospitality in order to attack extremely friendly governments with whom we have good diplomatic and very good trade relations, we have a very difficult balance to strike. On this occasion, we have concluded that British interests do require his removal," Mrs Widdecombe said.

Claude Moraes, director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, said her comments exposed the decision to legal challenge because she had acknowledged that the Government had used discretion in the deportation decision. The move had nothing to do with Mr Mas'ari not being "conducive to the public good", as required by the Immigration Act.

Lord Avebury, a Liberal Democrat peer and chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group, said the expulsion was a breach of Britain's obligations under the UN Convention. He added that "highly improper" criticism of Mr Mas'ari by Mr Rifkind had seriously prejudiced the asylum seeker's case.

George Galloway, the Scottish Labour MP who has championed the Saudi opposition, wrote to the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, saying his decision to deport Mr Mas'ari was a "sordid act of obeisance to the arms dealers in Britain and the dictators in Riyadh".

Rosie Douglas, leader of the leftist Dominica Labour party, is visiting Britain by chance and joined the campaign against Mr Mas'ari's expulsion from Britain.

Opposition to the move in Dominica has already been voiced by the former prime minister, Eugenia Charles, and by the island's main opposition leader, Brian Alleyne, of the rightwing Dominica Freedom Party.

The Foreign Office continued to insist there had been no "quid pro quo" increase in aid to Dominica, though the Overseas Development Administration said that British aid to Dominica was now "on track" to increase to £2 million from £500,000 last year as a result of the clearance of debt arrears.

Mr Mas'ari was imprisoned and tortured in Saudi Arabia before he came to Britain in April 1994. His anti-American organisation campaigns for an elected government and against corruption and the presence of foreign troops in the country.

Saudi Arabia is Britain's 18th largest export market. More crucial still is the $30 billion al-Yamamah arms-for-oil deal, signed by Margaret Thatcher in 1985, which involves the supply of British Aerospace Tornado aircraft and other defence equipment over 20 years.

Arms and the man, page 10
Comment, page 12

Famine strikes flood-stricken North Korea

John Gittings

FOOD rations have been cut drastically for 22 million North Koreans as the world's most isolated regime struggles against flood damage and a catastrophic fall in production.

Rations for coal miners and others doing heavy work have been almost halved in the past year. Six million children are also on short rations and many show signs of stunted growth. The World Health Organisation says medical services throughout the country are "very fragile".

Cereals are supposed to provide three-quarters of the average calorie intake, with the rest coming from fish, meat, vegetables and oil. But United Nations officials say that because of "chronic shortages", these are seldom available.

Reports from UN aid officials, who have been given exceptional access to normally closed areas since last summer's floods, show that the North Korean crisis goes far deeper than was originally thought. The floods are seen as the last straw after five years of declining food production.

Poor climate and mountainous terrain, says a joint report by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), obliged North Korea to rely heavily on intensive use of chemicals and electric power to improve and irrigate the land. But the loss of aid from China and the former Soviet Union, and Pyongyang's low credit rating abroad, meant these inputs could not be maintained. Cereal production has declined every year since 1990.

UN officials who have travelled

continued on page 3

Tributes pour in as France mourns Mitterrand

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

FRANCE was preparing this week for a period of solemn religious mourning for its avowedly agnostic former president, François Mitterrand, who died on Monday, aged 79, after a three-year battle against prostate cancer.

Tributes from world leaders flowed in, and red roses were laid by ordinary citizens at Socialist party headquarters at Les Invalides.

The former Socialist president's funeral and burial, in a family grave, was due to take place in Jarnac, the small town in south-west France where he was born and of which he said, in his heart, he had never left.

Mitterrand, who was president for two terms — from 1981 until May last year — was said to have died at his desk at 8.30am.

To the end, he had enjoyed a double private life. Georges-Marc Benamou, a family friend and biographer, said Mitterrand had spent Christmas with his companion, Anne Pingeot, and their daughter, Mazarine, in the Egyptian resort of Aswan. He then celebrated New Year with his wife, Danielle and sons at his home in Latche, south-west France.

After paying his respects, President Jacques Chirac used his new year address to the media to pay homage to his predecessor. "During his 14 years [in power], Mr Mitterrand wrote an important page in the history of our country. He guaranteed the functioning of our institutions, he guarded the democratic process with serenity," he said.

Leaders from around the world paid tribute to Mitterrand.

At the Socialist party headquarters, many echoed the view that Mitterrand's greatest achievement was his commitment to a united Europe.

Former café owner Yvette Ouge, aged 63, who had voted Socialist all her life, said: "He was an enormous pillar of both politics and intellectual life. He helped along the modernisation of France to an unbelievable extent while uniting Europe."

Not everyone praised him. A retired history teacher, aged 70, paid tribute to his leadership while feeling "alienated by his ideas". Another man called him a "rascal".

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Palestine mourns 'the Engineer' 3
Snow adds to US misery 5
Blair outlines his vision for Britain 9
Road protesters dig for victory 11
How tests are tearing Tahiti apart 13

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Hostilities break out over Northern Ireland

HUGO YOUNG'S commentary ("Peace and goodwill but not yet in Ireland", January 7) illustrates all too well the kind of attitude which has allowed the situation in Ireland to drag on for so long. After all, why bother with facts when he can muster a post-imperial sneer?

A cursory glance at the employment statistics will show him that Catholics are still heavily discriminated against in Northern Ireland. A cursory acquaintance with the situation on the ground will tell him that young men in Nationalist areas continue to be harassed by the security forces, and that the British army is using the ceasefire (and it has been called a ceasefire — another fact) to strengthen its fortifications in border areas. So much for a reliance on "historical" grievances.

The historical grievances Young refers to are, no doubt, such things as the British government's shoot-to-kill policy, the running of death squads both within and without the RUC and army, and the provision of weaponry to loyalist terrorists — all of which has taken place in the past 10 years. Not what most people understand by "history", though the usage is technically correct. Going back a bit further we find discrimination even more widespread than it is now: violent pogroms and a police state which bore comparison with the South Africa of the time.

The fact that Nationalists seem willing to put such things in the past for the sake of peace is, I think, a magnificent example to a British government which has done nothing but stall since the IRA announced its ceasefire.

I can only assume that when Young says that the goal of a united Ireland no longer commands support in that country he is testifying to his clairvoyant powers. There is certainly no evidence to back him up. Indeed, all the evidence is that the people of the Republic and Nationalists in the North are united and firm in their commitment to the goal of a united Ireland. They are, however, willing to compromise for the present in the hope of winning over the so-called loyalists in time. In doing so they show a commitment to the cause of peace which is sadly lacking from the current government in Britain, from Unionist leaders, and from certain newspaper columnists.
Graham Day,
Falkirk, Stirlingshire

IS NOT the present IRA ceasefire a compromise? For further compromise to be possible there has to be negotiation. Of course the British government's objective is a total and permanent cessation of paramilitary activities in Northern Ireland, including the handover of all weapons and armaments. But John Major wants this before any negotiations commence. What would he want from negotiations then? A promise from the IRA not to raise any more money for the purchase of arms in return for his promise to put troops back in to protect the Catholic communities again?

Each of the conflicts referred to by Hugo Young is at a quite different stage from the others. The Bosnia settlement, if implemented, will now enter the "partition" stage. A situation much like that which brought the Northern Ireland territory into being as a political enclave in 1922. Which incidentally also happened as a result of one of those much vaunted "compromises" of Mr Young's, and that gives the Irish a valid claim to a tradition of compromise. Whether a lasting peace can be created in Bosnia will depend on whether the majority communities can set up systems of government in which the minorities can trust and even participate.

The Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank is at a somewhat more advanced stage than the Irish situation. Such action by Britain in Northern Ireland might gain a very positive response from Sinn Fein and the IRA. However, the Rabin assassination is a sample of the reaction which could be expected from the Protestant paramilitaries if such a move were to be contemplated. Also, the Israeli withdrawal may stop short of a complete handover of all of the occupied territory, just as Britain failed to relinquish all of the territory held in Ireland in 1922.

Is the Israeli government going to hang on to a piece of land on the West Bank to placate the settlers and avoid further assassinations?
E P Callanan,
Ilford, Essex

A world disservice

YOUR LEADER (January 7) rightly castigates the Government for squandering one of its few remaining assets, the BBC World Service. It is high time that it was separated from the Foreign Office. Some years ago, the World Service had to suspend its service in Spanish directed at Spain, a country with many Anglophiles. The cost represented one per cent of the FCO's expenditure in Spain — the sort of figure achievable by turning off the lights in the embassy.

Another cut in the budget is for overseas aid. Britain's proportion is already well below that of other western countries, although Baroness Chalker claims that it goes to deserving causes and is better "targeted". Now deserving causes will have to go without and the target will be smaller.

The Tories boast that "in foreign affairs, Britain punches above its weight". Is this how they do it?
W R Haines,
London

YOUR LEADER about the World Service was both misleading and repeated certain errors which have appeared in the press before. The facts are as follows:

❑ The outcome of the current spending round was a reduction of 7 per cent in cash terms over each of the next three years for the Foreign Office diplomatic wing. The World Service and other bodies such as the British Council have to be funded out of this reduced provision;

❑ Cuts to the Foreign Office budget are much bigger both absolutely and proportionately than those to the BBC World Service;

❑ We went to considerable lengths to reduce the pressure on the World Service, which we value highly, but which cannot be exempt from some cuts;

❑ Less than £13 million (not £130 million as you state) of the FCO's budget is spent on entertainment. This is shared among 183 countries with which we have diplomatic or consular relations.
Jeremy Hanley MP,
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

Double explosion

I WAS MOVED by the Letter from Namibia by Margaret Bradley (December 31), which brought up two pressing issues related to mines. The closing of mines that produce precious and semi-precious stones and various ores has terrible consequences for all who live and work in the area; the problem of landmines is also devastating for local communities, indeed for whole countries.

In 60 countries around the world, from Afghanistan to Mozambique, from Cambodia to Yugoslavia, and almost every place in between where there has been a recent conflict, 110 million landmines are waiting to kill or maim. Nato forces arriving in Bosnia are already becoming victims of landmines. Most of them do their work long after the military has left, and 90 per cent of victims are civilians, 30 per cent of them women and children. Each year an estimated 26,000 fall victim to these insidious weapons, which continue to be laid at a rate of 2 million to 5 million a year. Landmines are cheap to buy — from $3 to $30 — but cost from $300 to $1,000 to remove, hence the snail-like pace of removal.

Many landmines are laid in prime agricultural areas, rendering the land useless, or terribly dangerous. Women and children collecting water and firewood, or picking up landmines designed to look like toys, are especially vulnerable.

World leaders, including Pope John Paul II, Bishop Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama and UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, support the international ban on landmines. It is sad that nations, including China, Russia and the United States, did not agree to even a series of modest restrictions on the use of landmines at the October 1994 Vienna meeting to review the 1980 UN Protocol on the use of anti-personnel landmines. We can only hope that when the 44 nations reconvene in Geneva in January they make better progress.
Diana Quick,
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, New York, USA

Setting O J to rights

MARTIN WALKER'S usual high quality perceptions and analyses failed him (December 31) on the verdict in the O J Simpson case.

The jury did not "cast its verdict for a different trial altogether" — it delivered its judgment for the very case in which a "racist white police" officer, when asked (in the absence of the jury) if he had tampered with any of the evidence, refused to answer and invoked the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination. Had this testimony been given in the presence of the jury, it would have been morally justified, although procedurally prohibited, if the members of the jury had shouted, "we find the defendant not guilty!" even before the case was submitted to them for determination.

In the US and the UK, the jury's verdict is properly their collective evaluation of the quality of the presentation made in the courtroom. Under the rules of the game, "an unimpressive prosecution" presenting "perjured racism of a white detective" more than justified the verdict.
Elliot Taikeff,
Quito, Ecuador

Briefly

MY RECOLLECTION is that the British government did not accept the existence of Dachau, Belsen, Auschwitz and the other camps until the end of the war when the evidence was inescapable. Had the current proposals for asylum seekers been in effect then, would we have been assured that Mr Hitler had been democratically elected and that the German Jews were in no danger?
Name and address supplied

LIKE MANY, I too am dismayed by British government suggestions to block asylum seekers from some countries. It is utterly foolish not to consider a case on its individual merits, especially as the information available may well have been critically distorted: a white list could be a whitewash.

Colombia, for instance, where I presently live, was recently blacklisted by Amnesty International, but the situation here is in fact much worse than anything they described, with the displacement and large-scale murder of indigenous populations by the state — with the complicity of the US administration — being a regular feature of life.
Timothy Dowling,
Medellin, Colombia

BEFORE going overboard in crediting Edward Jenner with solving the smallpox problem (Colin Luckhurst, December 3), remember that Jenner got the idea from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. She observed the practice of vaccination in Turkey in the 18th century, where it was already an old one having been practised in the Arab world since at least 600 AD, and in Africa long before European contact.
Peta A Jones,
Binga, Zimbabwe

IN THE light of the most recent episodes in the Windsor Follies, may I direct to Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales a suggestion which was first directed 175 years ago by George Canning to Caroline of Brunswick, the estranged wife of George IV?

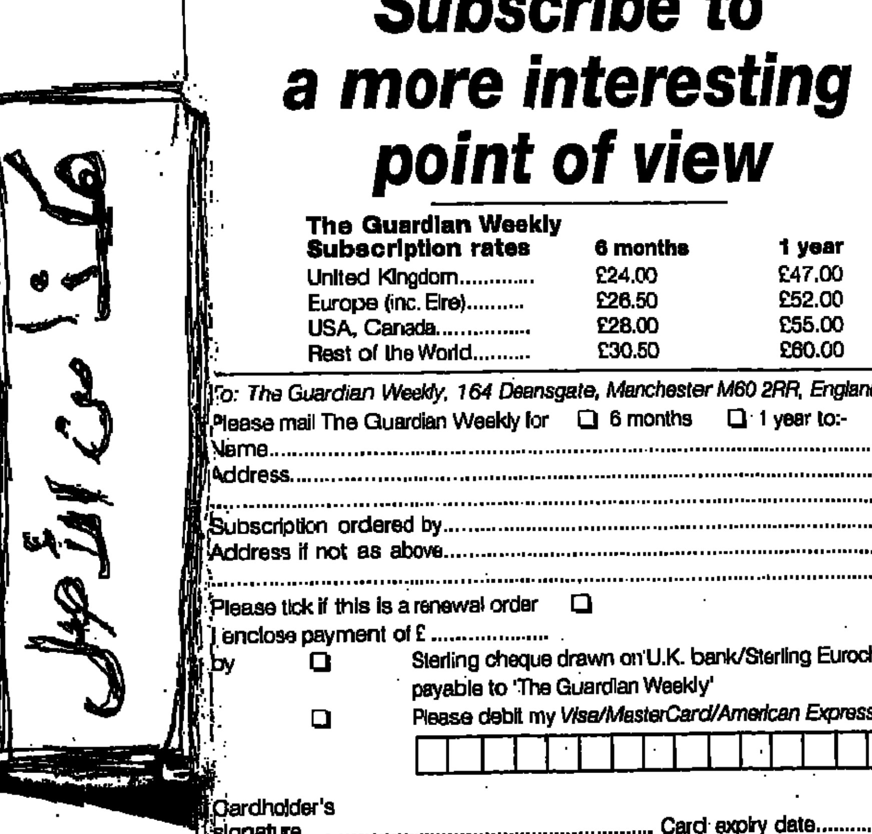
Most gracious queen, we three implore
To go away and sin no more.
Or, if that effort be too great,
To go away at any rate.

F Ivor Gould,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

THE manoeuvrings of President Chirac over the bomb (continuing to test while declaring future adherence to a comprehensive ban) remind me of Augustine: "Lord, let me be chaste — but not yet."
Mary Evans Bapst,
Versoix, Switzerland

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'Engineer' killed by phone bomb

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

THE most hated man in Israel was killed last week in the Gaza Strip — executed by a tiny bomb hidden in a mobile phone.

Yahya Ayyash, known as the Engineer, is said to have planned and organised the killing of more than 70 Israelis in a 19-month spate of suicide bombings. He was almost certainly murdered by Israeli intelligence agents who have been hunting him for more than three years.

According to Israel Radio, Ayyash, aged 32, died in an explosion in the Jabiliya refugee camp, in the north of the territory controlled by the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Ayyash, himself a master bomb-maker, was killed by a 20-gram explosive charge packed into a cellphone.

Hamas, the minority Islamist group to which he belonged, warned of retribution. "The Hamas brigades will reach the hand which was behind this crime and will deal with it as it should be dealt with," it said.

Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader, was said to have visited the Gaza home of Mahmoud al-Zahhar, the Hamas spokesman, to express his condolences.

Ayyash was at the top of Israel's wanted list. He has been linked with 11 suicide-bombing missions between April 1994 and November 1995, which killed 75 people, mostly Israelis. Thirteen bombers also died.

Israel never acknowledges its assassination missions, but Israeli politicians and security sources did not attempt to conceal their pleasure at the news. The secret service, Shin Bet, and its overseas counterpart, Mossad, have murdered at least four Islamist leaders in the past 15 months.

Ayyash has been hunted since 1992. Since he came to public attention, he has been the devil incarnate to many Israelis, and a cult hero to Palestinians.

The hunt for his assassin is focused on an alleged Palestinian traitor, Kamal Hamad, a businessman implicated by his own family.

Mr Hamad, widely rumoured to have fled to New York, is the uncle of Ayyash's friend Ossama Hamad.

A friend of Ayyash since their days at the West Bank's university, Ossama said he got the cellular telephone which killed Ayyash from his uncle Kamal. He said his uncle may not have known about the explosives hidden in it, but suggested that he had co-operated with Israeli intelligence.

"Perhaps he thought they put in some listening devices," he said.

But Kamal Hamad is not the only suspect in what appears to have been a convoluted Israeli plan. An Israeli plane flew over Ayyash's hideout in the Gaza Strip at the time of the explosion.

On the last day of his life, Ayyash was staying in the home of Ossama's parents in Beit Lahia village. Osama, a Hamas activist aged 27, said the telephone rang at about 9am and he woke Ayyash to give him the call from his father, Abdel-Latif Ayyash.

"I walked away to let him speak privately. Suddenly, I heard the explosion and looked back and saw smoke," he said on his release after two days of questioning by Palestinian police.

Mr Arafat said the assassination was a violation of the Israeli-PLO peace deal. Israel closed its borders with both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, shops and businesses closed and the streets were eerily quiet. The overwhelming response to a strike call by Hamas reflected the Palestinians' outrage at the assassination.

● The head of Israel's Shin Bet secret service, criticised for the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin has resigned. The man, identified only by his first initial, "kaf", is being investigated by the assassination inquiry.

Yahya Ayyash: 'the Engineer'

Hero's welcome . . . A Palestinian boy climbs a fence to cheer the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat
PHOTO: KHALED ZIGHARI

Perry offers troops for Golan

THE United States is ready to station troops to monitor peace on the Golan Heights if both Israel and Syria request them, the US defence secretary, William Perry, confirmed on Monday, *writes Derek Brown*.

Peace talks between Israel and Syria resume this month. After years of stalemate, there is now unprecedented optimism on both sides that a deal can be reached, and the US, as host and sponsor of the negotiations, is pushing hard for yet another Middle East breakthrough in President Clinton's re-election year.

The key issue is the Golan Heights, which Israel captured in 1967. Syria is demanding their return as the price of peace; Israel, while tacitly acknowledging that it will have to withdraw, is demanding cast-iron security guarantees.

In previous rounds of negotiations the US has signalled its willingness in principle to contribute troops to a Golan peace-keeping force.

Mr Perry this week went further. "If the peace agreement between Israel and Syria is reached, and we hope and believe that will happen, and if that calls for a peace monitoring force in the Golan Heights, and if both Israel and Syria request the US to participate in that, we are prepared to do that," he said after meeting the Israeli prime minister, Shimon Peres.

During his visit to the Middle East Mr Perry announced two arms deals including $190 million for Israel's Arrow missile.

N Korea hit by famine

Continued from page 1

widely in the countryside note that Pyongyang has mobilised the population to tackle the damage. Peasants are joined by workers to clear clogged canals and rebuild shattered irrigation dykes, while cheerleaders wave huge red flags. Rhythmic chants in praise of Kim Il-sung's Juche (self-reliance) philosophy urge them on.

But the collective system has produced a society which depends very heavily on subsidised food rations and suffers immediately when the state runs short.

Until last year, rationing was based on a complex nine-level system, in which the highest grade provided 900 grams of cereal daily for workers in heavy industry and the lowest grade provided 100 grams for children in kindergartens.

To meet the present crisis, this system was simplified to three levels — children under 16, adults between 16 and 64, and those aged 65 and over — and lower rations were fixed. It is these lower targets which have now been further reduced.

A heavy-industry worker will now receive only 479 grams daily — just over half the original ration.

Grain imports from China ceased at the beginning of 1995 because of Pyongyang's inability to pay. The country's food reserve of 4 million tons of grain has been exhausted.

The WFP is struggling to find donors to enable it to continue with its relief plan. The first phase, which began late in November, should have fed 500,000 flood victims for three months. But the WFP was able to supply only a quarter of the food needed as few donors have come forward.

The FAO-WFP report appeals to international donors to support a food aid programme to a total of 1.2 million tons. It warns that the leanest period will come in August-September.

Pyongyang's secretive politics have discouraged foreign donors from giving aid. The propaganda machine continues to praise the "creative genius of the Great Leader Kim Jong-il", although the leader, the son and successor to the late Kim Il-sung, remains mysteriously out of sight.

But most observers are sceptical of any military move by Pyongyang.

Reuter adds from Seoul: South Korean President Kim Young-sam said on Tuesday that appeals by North Korea for food aid were a "crime and a betrayal" while Pyongyang poured resources into its huge military machine.

However, in a new year address, Kim said Seoul would offer help to the North if it changed its hostile towards South Korea and sought detente.

"It is a crime and a betrayal of the Korean people for North Korea to hope to receive aid from the international community while pouring all its national resources into maintaining its military power," Kim said.

He said Pyongyang's food shortage and economic problems were not a passing phenomenon.

"Their cause is rooted in the inefficient communist economic system and excessive military spending necessitated by its maintaining the fifth largest military of more than one million soldiers in a nation of only 20 million people," Kim said.

Comment, page 12

Murayama quits in favour of 'new man'

Kevin Rafferty in Tokyo

JAPAN'S trade and industry minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, is to succeed Tomiichi Murayama as prime minister, after all three partners in the coalition government gave him their backing. The changeover marks the return to power of the Liberal Democratic Party which has dominated post-war Japanese politics.

With the three coalition parties holding more than 290 of the 511 seats in the lower house, Mr Hashimoto, the conservative LDP's leader, is certain to win a formal vote in parliament confirming his succession.

But leaders of the main opposition Shinshinto (New Frontier Party) were angry at what they saw as an undemocratic transfer of power. They threatened a mass resignation of all their 170 MPs to try to force a general elections. Media commentators also expressed unease at the fourth change of prime minister since elections in 1993.

Mr Murayama announced to a stunned nation that he planned to resign because the new year was time for a new man with new ideas to take over. "In spite of a series of unexpected problems, I did my best. In some ways, I've been working above the limits of my capacity," the 71-year-old leader admitted.

In some ways the surprise was that Mr Murayama, the first Socialist prime minister for almost 50 years, lasted so long. He took over when the Socialists left the fragile "rainbow coalition" after the summer 1993 poll and ended up embracing their old enemies, the LDP.

Mr Murayama, a man popularly known as "Grandpop" and famous only for his bushy eyebrows, had had no experience of ministerial office when he was thrust into the hot seat in summer 1994.

Tabloid newspapers said Mr Murayama lasted so long because it suited the LDP to have a pliable front man, especially as Japan was experiencing four years of recession and the effects of earthquakes and terrorist attacks.

Mr Hashimoto whose character is in marked contrast to Mr Murayama's, was struggling to put together a cabinet on Tuesday as critics blasted his coalition's policy platform as a visionless product of timid political compromise.

But Mr Hashimoto, aged 58, who made headlines last year for his tough stance in a bitter car trade row with the United States, will have little chance to celebrate his anointment.

Seemingly aware of the stiff headwind he faces, Mr Hashimoto sternly told LDP members on Tuesday: "My responsibility, and that of the LDP, has become far greater now."

Mr Hashimoto spent much of the day in an apparently fruitless search for a politician willing to take the finance ministry portfolio — a hot seat at a time of strong public criticism of government plans to use $6.78 billion worth of taxpayers' money to wind up financially troubled mortgage firms.

The bad loan problem has come to symbolise the woes of Japan's financial system and is the focus of opposition strategy to force Mr Hashimoto to call early general elections.

Communists plot assault on Yeltsin

David Hearst

THE victors of last month's general election, Gennady Zyuganov's Communist Party of the Russian Federation, met in secret this week to discuss their tactics for the second stage of their assault on power: unseating Boris Yeltsin from the throne.

After taking 157 seats, more than a third of the new Duma, party leaders are sanguine about their chances of winning the presidential election in June. One central committee member said: "We need a strategy, not to gain as much as we can but lose as little as we can."

Acutely aware of the party's ideological divisions, the personal ambitions which will prevent the opposition from fielding a single candidate, and the expectations of its voters, Mr Zyuganov is likely to put his pragmatism to full use.

One of the first signs of this will be a marked restraint in the carve-up of important Duma posts. Mr Zyuganov is understood to support a non-communist as its politically powerful Speaker.

Recalling the example of the former Speaker, an ex-communist, Ivan Rybkin, who got so close to Mr Yeltsin that his party failed miserably in the elections, the Communist leadership will not seek the limelight by proposing one of their own for the post. For one thing, the Speaker is also a permanent member of Mr Yeltsin's kitchen cabinet, the security council, and although the voting is secret, Mr Rybkin has to share at least collective responsibility for the botched assault on Chechenia.

For another, a "Red Speaker" would be held responsible by the rank-and-file for not confronting the government on its economic policies, while providing an easy target for the presidential administration. Vladimir Gusev, a negotiator from Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic party, has been mentioned as a compromise candidate.

The Communists will put their men at the head of some key committees, as in the last parliament, but their main task will be to create a shadow cabinet, not to block government legislation.

The reasons for this approach are many. First, the Communist victory, which exceeded their own expectations, created a huge wave of expectation which could easily turn sour, particularly as parliament is constitutionally weak.

The second is the calculation that Mr Zyuganov could only win if he represented the interests of a broader political spectrum than his party. Valentine Chikin, chief editor of Sovietskaya Rossia, and a central committee member, said: "The example we have in mind is François Mitterrand. Once he became president, he became president of all the French and even distanced himself from his Socialist government. This is a normal process."

Mr Zyuganov's pragmatism is, however, not risk-free. It has already brought him at times bitter opposition from far-left groups within the communist movement.

Even in Mr Zyuganov's own party there is a wide divergence of opinion on some of the main policies. Party policy is to re-nationalise raw materials — oil and gas, as well as the coal, minerals and timber industries. Mr Chikin said that while industries which were monopolies had to come under state control, the private sector would also be present.

However, the Zyuganov leadership opposes "revolutionary change", recognising that redistributing businesses and property could well result in "civil war".

● Russia's foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, has resigned to take up his seat in parliament. His announcement, which came as no surprise, was accepted by Mr Yeltsin, who said he was thinking "more and more" about running for a second term.

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The Week

A CHECHEN rebel band called "Lone Wolf" seized at least 1,000 hostages at a hospital and maternity home in neighbouring Dagestan on Tuesday and threatened to shoot them if Russia does not withdraw its troops from Chechenia.

ONE of the worst snowstorms in more than 70 years blanketed the eastern United States on Sunday, depositing 2ft of snow in places and stranding thousands of travellers.

ALVARO ARZU of the National Advancement Party, declared victory in Guatemala's second-round presidential elections over Alfonso Portillo of the Guatemalan Republic Front.
Le Monde, page 20

A CAR belonging to the lawyer of Jennifer Harbury, the widow of a Guatemalan guerrilla leader allegedly tortured and murdered in 1992 by a paid CIA "asset", was firebombed in Washington.

LEFTIST guerrillas in Turkey have shot dead two leading industrialists who worked for the Toyota car company. A secretary was also killed in the attack.

FRANCE will complete its nuclear weapons tests in the South Pacific by the end of next month, President Chirac said.
Paradise lost, page 13

LEDUM MITEE, a leader of the Nigerian minority rights group of the hanged Ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, was arrested at a rally in the south-eastern Rivers state.

EUROPEAN scientists have managed to create fleeting atoms of anti-matter for the first time. They said nine "anti-hydrogen" atoms were created last September, but each lasted just 40 billionths of a second before being annihilated by ordinary matter.

MEXICAN authorities rejected allegations that the man in jail for killing presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio is a double for the real killer.

AN ANGRY crowd tried to lynch four Russian crew members after a cargo plane they were piloting crashed into a crowded market in the centre of Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire, killing more than 250 people.

MADONNA won a legal victory when a drifter who had threatened to kill her was found guilty of stalking and terrorising her and assaulting her bodyguard. He faces 10 years in jail.

HEAVY snows in central Mexico killed millions of the endangered orange and black Monarch butterflies.

Militias help Nato clear landmines

THE first casualties in the Nato-led peace implementation force in Bosnia are, — as military planners feared — the victims of landmines, *writes David Fairhall.*

Two British soldiers were injured at Sanski Most last month, and an American was seriously injured when his vehicle detonated a mine near the River Sava. Last week two British soldiers were injured in the Sarajevo suburbs.

Between 4 million and 6 million mines have been laid throughout former Yugoslavia since the war began, and as the troops spread out across unfamiliar terrain blanketed in snow American commanders believe this is the most serious threat they face.

The problem is far too big for even the 60,000-strong implementation force (I-For) to tackle alone. It is relying on local militias who scattered the mines to do their own clearance.

The Dayton accord requires the militias to provide information on their minefields — a commitment largely fulfilled — and to clear a 4km-wide separation zone along the new internal boundaries within a month.

According to Major Martin Andrews, who works with mines for the I-For headquarters at Kiseljak, the militias' response has been positive.

"The BiH [the mainly Muslim Bosnian army] have been bending over backwards to help. They have produced 800 sets of minefield records and a map," he said.

"The VRS [Bosnian Serb militia] have not been so quick to respond, by all accounts, but we believe they do now understand the urgency and are ready to co-operate.

"In the British sector [which includes a lot of territory controlled by the Croatian HVO militia] the multinational division have received 80 per cent of the information they were expecting."

Without accurate maps and records, he says, mine clearance is virtually impossible. The alternative is a painstaking manual search with a prodder.

● In New York on Monday, the UN Security Council met to rebuke Croatia for human rights abuses and to demand it hand over accused war criminals to a UN tribunal. It said Serbs in Croatia's Krajina region have been the victims of murder and other atrocities since Zagreb's successful offensive last August.

Croatia was also told it was blocking those refugees who wanted to return to their homes, was not adequately bringing to justice those guilty of abuses and was not handing over indicted war criminals.

Washington Post, page 15



Martin John Begosh, the first US member of I-For to be wounded in Bosnia when his Jeep hit a mine PHOTOGRAPH: LYNNE SLADKY

Cypriot police 'involved in murders'

Chris Drake in Nicosia

CYPRIOT police officers have been accused by the island's president of murder, bombings, arson attacks, and being deeply involved in underworld battles for the control of drugs, prostitution and gambling.

In an astonishing public announcement which shocked the country, Glafkos Clerides claimed that some of the killings were carried out with the full knowledge of senior officers and that police involvement in underworld corruption reached the force's highest levels.

The island's boast of a low crime rate is a standard part of its advertising to attract tourists. Close to a million Britons take their holidays here each year. It is also home to two British bases with 10,000 servicemen and their families, and the regional headquarters of hundreds of international companies.

This image of a peaceful holiday haven has been seriously damaged recently by a series of gangland-style attacks. Nightclub owners have been killed, cars blown up and flats, clubs and massage parlours set on fire. Very few of the crimes, including eight murders, have been solved despite police assurances that everything was being done to track down those responsible.

Now President Clerides claims that the police are unable to make arrests because they themselves are to blame.

His allegations were made in a letter accepting the resignation of the assistant police chief, Costas Papacostas, which revealed that he was considering sacking him. The police chief, Andreas Potamaris, is on leave abroad due to ill-health but is expected to resign too.

The force's reputation was already badly tarnished by revelations in November that officers in the seaside resort of Limassol had tortured suspects. A report by an independent board of inquiry, described "an organised system of subjecting detainees to inhuman torture aimed at securing confessions".

UN envoy says civil war raging in Burundi

MASSACRES and other "terrible things" are rife in Burundi and even its own political leaders recognise a civil war is raging, a senior United Nations envoy said on Tuesday, *writes Mark Dodd.*

Speaking in Nairobi after a two-day visit to Burundi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, said ethnic extremists were the main reason for insecurity in the central African country.

"The security situation is extremely serious. The military does not have full control over all of the extremists, so this is the real problem," she told reporters.

"The government, the president, all say this is like a civil war situation," said Mrs Ogata, who discussed the ethnic crisis with the Hutu president and Tutsi prime minister and other officials on Monday.

"It is a deep political crisis that the country is facing with a lot of military activity overtones," she said.

But Mrs Ogata said only the government and political leaders could resolve security problems in Burundi. — *Reuter*



No business like snow business

The USA this week

Martin Walker

ONLY our secular age could have so stubbornly refused to acknowledge the workings of Providence's wry sense of humour in the monstrous blizzard that struck the eastern states, closing down the federal capital of Washington on the very weekend that the squabbling politicians had grumpily agreed to re-open the government after three weeks of shutdown. The deal was reached late on Friday night. On Saturday morning, museums and parks and federal offices began hesitantly to stir once more, and by Sunday, three feet of snow on Pennsylvania Avenue frustrated the belated compromises of White House and Congress. On Monday, the government was closed even more decisively than it had been the previous week.

The great storm closed airports, rail and metro in the capital, and stranded hundreds of thousands of travellers up and down the Atlantic coast from Boston south to the Carolinas. The news of the weather mercifully pushed the Washington wrangles off the front pages, and also robbed Hillary Clinton of much of the publicity she wanted for her book launch this week. It Takes A Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us is the title, which just about sums up this glutinous effort to soften the First Lady's image.

A pity her book-launch interviews were overshadowed by the belated discovery of the records of her legal work for the Whitewater company, which showed that she had billed the firm $6,000, at $120 an hour, for legal services. Fifty hours of work suggests rather more involvement than Mrs Clinton had hitherto acknowledged.

Always a little odd in presidential election years, Washington has now become a thoroughly dysfunctional city as President Clinton and the Republican Congress take every political dispute to the brink of bureaucratic disaster. Some 280,000 federal government employees have been sent home without pay for 21 days, and another 480,000 have been working without pay in a great charade. It is broadly accepted that they will be paid, whether they worked or not, once White House and Congress finally agree a compromise over the budget.

But that final compromise may still be far distant. The agreement that was reached just before the blizzard blew in was a very partial and highly complex deal that had the US media scrambling like referees at a boxing match to work out who "won".

Throughout the week, the Republican anguish had been palpable, as they weighed their budget-cutting principles against their dwindling popularity. The party leaders, Senator Robert Dole and Speaker Newt Gingrich, came up with a joint approach, but the 73 hard-line freshmen Republicans in the House refused to go along until Clinton surrendered by delivering their non-negotiable demand: a balanced budget plan over seven years as scored by congressional figures.

The Senate Republicans are divided among themselves, but a compromise on Friday last week saw 47 Democratic Congressmen and the Republicans in both House and Senate agree a new target of $168 billion in cuts. The figures are far less important than the fact that these conservative Democrats have finally signed up with the Republicans on the core issue of Medicare. This means that the White House may now face a bipartisan majority big enough to pass a Medicare-cutting budget over a presidential veto, which would be disastrous for Clinton.

So, while each party nervously looked back at its own ranks for signs of desertions, a complex tripartite deal was agreed. In phase one, Congress voted money to re-open the closed public services of parks, museums, passport offices and the like. In phase two, it voted money to keep funding a range of agencies. In the third measures, Congress voted to keep the whole of the current US government services running until January 26, but only if Clinton delivers a seven-year budget which the Congressional Budget Office declares to be in balance.

This, it must be stressed, is the economics of Alice in Wonderland. What the Republicans really want is the symbolic act of surrender by Clinton. They will not of course get it, since Clinton is already drafting the State of the Union address which will pay tribute to the Republicans for their modest part in carrying out his 1992 campaign promises to balance the budget, deliver a middle-class tax cut and "end welfare as we know it".

So what was settled at the weekend was little enough. However, under the phase two system of voting funds for particular programmes and individual federal agencies, the Republicans have made it clear that they are prepared to pick and choose which bits of the government they will deign to keep open.

They are quite blunt about the ideology of this. For example, the FBI, the Drugs Enforcement Agency, prisons and prosecution services are all now funded. Congressman John Boehner, chairman of the House Republican Conference, called these "essential parts of the Justice Department that are very important to us". But two other functions of the Justice Department, the civil rights and the anti-trust divisions, are deliberately not funded.

This is the real threat. Unless Clinton comes up with the balanced budget plan the Republicans can swallow, they will keep open only those bits of government that suit them.

The casual way that this is being done is best illustrated by the case of the State Department Diplomatic Society, which found itself funded this week, even though it does not exist. What the Republicans had wanted to fund, while slashing away at budgets that help bring students to the US on scholarships, was State Department Diplomatic Security, which helps guard US diplomats against terrorists. Such are the ways of the dysfunctional city, sunk beneath the unfamiliar snows.

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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 14 1996

A maker of modern France

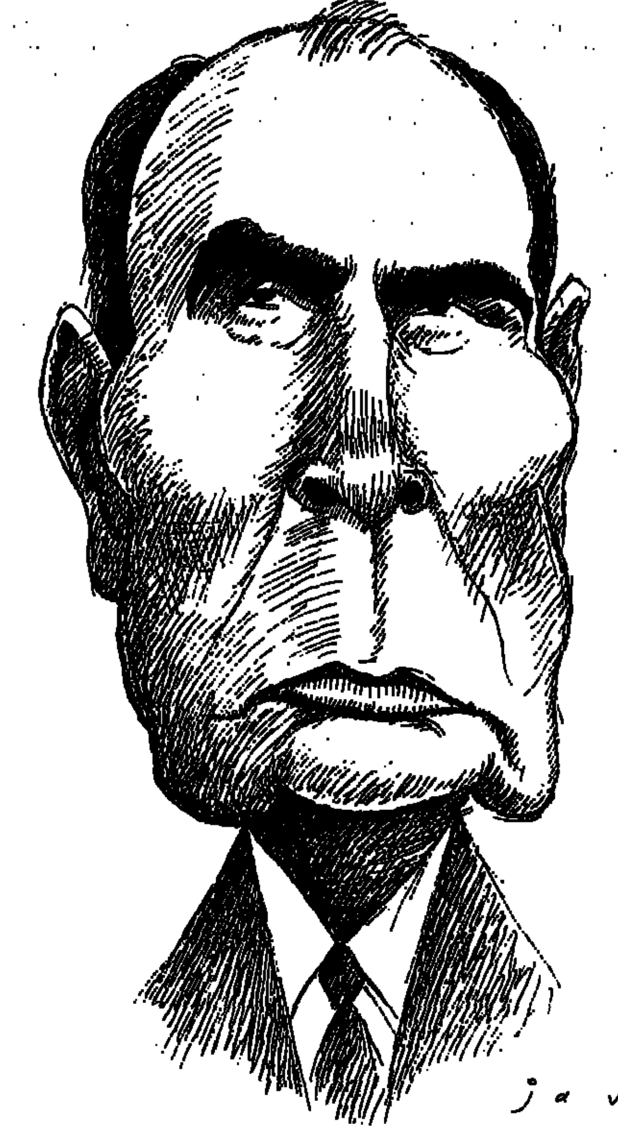
François Mitterrand

THE DEATH of François Mitterrand on Monday at the age of 79 removes from the European political stage one of its most tenacious leading men.

He will be remembered as the leftwing president of France who in his two terms of office between 1981 and 1995 taught socialism the realities of power in a post-Marxist age and who sought to convince his fellow citizens that European integration was the means to fulfill France's self-proclaimed mission to lead Europe.

His election to the presidency in 1981 was the culmination of a political odyssey that had started 35 years earlier and had survived setbacks which would have destroyed a less single-minded ambition. His career combined moments of great national popularity with long periods in which he was distrusted as a scheming and unprincipled adventurer.

Towards the end of his second term, he became the most unpopular president in the history of the Fifth Republic. The publicising of his links in the second world war with the collaborationist Vichy regime, and even more of his friendship with René Bouquet, who supervised the rounding up of the Paris Jews in 1942, caused utter dismay to those who had regarded him as the champion of republican values. Posterity is likely to be kinder and to place him, alongside de Gaulle, as a key figure in the creation of modern France.



The comparison with de Gaulle never failed to infuriate the general's acolytes, for whom Mitterrand personified the corrupt political class which had done so much damage to France before the advent of the Fifth Republic. Yet there are similarities between the two men. They shared an Olympian manner; a deep interest in literature and history; the capacity to behave with cold ruthlessness towards opponents; and a refusal to acknowledge the right of the United States to determine the foreign policy of its allies. Above all, Mitterrand taught the French left to accept the institutional order created by de Gaulle after 1958.

Little in Mitterrand's background suggested the future course of his career. Born in 1916 in a small village near Cognac in the Charente department, he was one of eight children and grew up in a family that was bourgeois, conservative and Catholic. He did not rebel against this background either as a schoolboy or as a law student in Paris. To the extent that he was involved in the frenetic politics of the 1930s, his sympathies lay with the nationalist right rather than with leftwing causes such as the Spanish Civil War.

The second world war was the making of Mitterrand. He fought, and was decorated for bravery, in the disastrous 1940 campaign that led to the fall of France. Like de Gaulle 25 years earlier, he was taken prisoner by the Germans. Unlike de Gaulle he managed to escape from captivity and returned to France. What happened next provides the background to the first great controversy of his career. Mitterrand became an important resistance leader and took part in the liberation of Paris in 1944. But he also accepted employment from Marshal Pétain's collaborationist Vichy government and was awarded the regime's medal of honour. To his enemies this showed his duplicitous opportunism, to his supporters it demonstrated his intelligence in finding a cover for his resistance work.

Mitterrand emerged from the war with a wife, Danielle, daughter of a resistance leader, to whom he stayed married despite an almost legendary string of affairs. Crucially, the war defined Mitterrand as an opponent of the two principal forces of the New France — Gaullism and communism. At a memorably unsuccessful meeting with de Gaulle in Algiers, he refused to acknowledge the latter's authority over the resistance movement, an act of insubordination that the general never forgave. At the same time, however, he resisted the smothering embrace of the French Communist Party which had emerged as France's largest political movement. This double refusal of allegiance gives a unity to the whole of his subsequent career.

By the age of 30 Mitterrand was established as a drivingly ambitious, independent-minded, professional politician. Elected to the National Assembly in 1946 for the largely rural department of the Nièvre, he retained his seat for all but three of the next 35 years and acquired the local power base — mayor of Château-Chinon, member of the departmental council — that all French politicians regard as a vital political resource. In 1947, he became the youngest government minister this century and he subsequently served in a total of 11 cabinets during the Fourth Republic. No one doubted his intelligence or his capacity for hard work; what was queried was the integrity of his convictions.

He was distrusted by the left for his willingness to lock up Algerian nationalists once the war of independence began in 1954 and by the nationalist right for his Europeanism and his support for self-government for France's sub-Saharan colonies. This period gave Mitterrand his reputation for Machiavellian cunning. To say that his name was made by the Fourth Republic is a dubious accolade given the regime's collapse in the face of decay at home and insurrection in Algeria.

What saved Mitterrand from political oblivion was paradoxically his absolute refusal to compromise with the new political order established by de Gaulle in 1958. He opposed de Gaulle's return to power and in a famous pamphlet, Le Coup d'État Permanent, denounced the authoritarian nature of the new Fifth Republic. In the short term, this opposition cost him dear. He lost his National Assembly seat in the 1958 elections and was refused entry to a new leftwing grouping, the Parti Socialiste Autonome. He was then nearly destroyed in 1959 by a scandal in which he was falsely accused — as it much later transpired — of setting up a fake assassination attempt. He was out of office for 23 years.

Mitterrand's long march to power through the Fifth Republic began with the 1965 presidential contest. His very isolation made him an expendable stalking horse for the big battalions of the communist and socialist parties in a contest which everyone expected de Gaulle to win. The 45 per cent of the vote that Mitterrand won in round two suggested that there might be political life after de Gaulle.

In 1971 he engineered the sort of political operation at which he excelled by getting himself elected first secretary of the Socialist party, a position he held for 10 years. Under him the party became the vehicle for a generation of political talents and ambitions, who fell under the spell of a leader who could combine inspirational warmth with chilling remoteness.

In 1972 he negotiated an alliance with the still powerful Communist Party that enabled him to mount an impressive second bid for the presidency after Pompidou's death. In a thrilling contest, he lost by under 1 per cent of the vote to the non-Gaullist conservative, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

These high points were, however, matched by lows that often seemed to leave him politically dead. He came badly out of May 1968, being rejected by radicals as just another machine politician and denounced by constitutionalists for what looked like an illegal bid for power. Ten years later, his entire strategy for gaining power — the alliance with the communists — collapsed when the latter took fright at the advance of their socialist rivals and sabotaged the expected victory of the left in the 1978 parliamentary elections.

The collapse of the communist vote in the 1981 presidential election allowed Mitterrand to sweep to power in the second round at the head of a coalition of socialist enthusiasts, communist voters, and Gaullist and non-party malcontents. It was a sensational victory and one that Mitterrand immediately consolidated by holding fresh elections for the National Assembly in which the socialists triumphed.

Mitterrand's presidency can be divided into three periods. In the first, he and his governments sought to realise the economic, social and political reforms of French socialism. The guillotine was abolished; civil liberties and trade union rights were strengthened; local government was freed from the stifling embrace of centralisation; and welfare benefits were increased. The core innovation, however, was an extensive programme of nationalisation and demand stimulation that set France on a course diametrically opposed to that being followed in the US and Britain. It was small wonder that Mitterrand became a beacon of hope for the faltering European left who chose to overlook his resolute support for the introduction of Cruise missiles to counter the Soviet threat.

He shared with de Gaulle a cold ruthlessness and a refusal to bow to US hegemony

Within two years of taking office, Mitterrand's recovery programme crashed because of low investment, soaring inflation and a depreciating currency. Thus in 1983 a second period began as Mitterrand abandoned the dream of "socialism in one country" and turned to the new orthodoxies of sound money and company profitability.

His conversion was probably made easier by the fact that his socialism had never been based on economics. In the short term, employment and his popularity plummeted. But his control over his ministers and over the socialist majority in the National Assembly remained intact and gradually the French economy recovered its competitiveness. Even the more than honourable defeat of the Socialist party in the 1986 legislative elections was turned to his advantage. By staying in office and appointing the Gaullist leader Jacques Chirac prime minister, he inaugurated the period of cohabitation. This enabled him to consolidate a highly effective profile as the venerable, but vigilant, guardian of constitutional proprieties and national solidarity against the aggressive neo-liberalism of Chirac. Potential embarrassments like the 1985 Rainbow Warrior scandal, in which French secret services blew up a Greenpeace boat in Auckland harbour were shrugged aside.

The second period also saw the European Community move to the centre of the political agenda. He sent Jacques Delors to Brussels; worked to heal the running sore of Britain's Community contribution; and put his authority behind the Single European Act. He strolled to victory in the 1988 presidential election, standing on his record and personality and articulating a collection of liberal-sounding platitudes that bore little resemblance to the ambitious policies of 1981. His second term soon turned sour.

His problems originated in a series of domestic and international crises. His governments were quite unable to prevent widening social inequalities and to slow the march of unemployment to the 3 million mark, an increase that proved a fertile recruiting ground for the extreme right politics of Le Pen's National Front. The collapse of the Soviet empire left France once again exposed to the awful power of its neighbour across the Rhine. Mitterrand strove energetically to organise the new European disorder by a series of diplomatic moves, of which the most substantial was the 1991 Maastricht Treaty, accelerating the process of Community integration.

A series of scandals involving the Socialist party and presidential associates did untold damage in a country which always believes the worst of its rulers. Mitterrand survived charges of personal corruption; but his haughty manner and his extravagant use of public money for public, and private, ceremony caused great resentment.

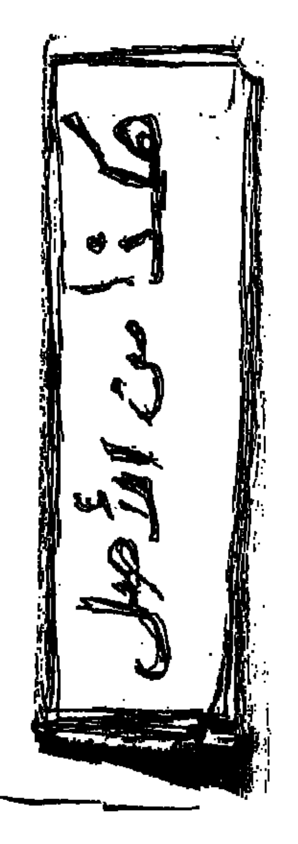
Mitterrand made the disastrous miscalculation of sacking his respected prime minister Michel Rocard and replacing him by Edith Cresson, of whom it might politely be said that she was a long-time friend. Cresson proved totally unable to win the respect of the nation, dragging Mitterrand down with her.

Mitterrand was unable to achieve more than the narrowest of majorities in the 1992 referendum on Maastricht. Within months the Socialist party he had done so much to create went down to overwhelming defeat in the parliamentary elections and plunged into recriminations. In a melancholy epilogue, his last socialist prime minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, shot himself out of despair that he too was accused of financial malpractice.

Once again Mitterrand's sheer toughness and imperturbability came to the surface. His opponents continued to treat him with wary respect and his presidency did not suffer the fate of American equivalents like Carter. Machiavelli never became Lear, though the revelations of his Vichy past inevitably posed the question of what, apart from his own star, he had ever believed in.

Peter Morris

François Maurice Marie Mitterrand, politician, born October 29, 1916; died January 7, 1996



The Week in Britain James Lewis

Police sound alarm over rise in street violence

IN SPITE OF the increase in gun-related crime, most British policemen are still resistant to the idea of carrying firearms. There are, however, demands that they should be better protected — with pepper or CS gas sprays — against teenagers toting knives and iron bars. This follows a spate of recent incidents in which people, including policemen, have been killed or seriously injured with such weapons.

After the death of headmaster Philip Lawrence (a 15-year-old youth has since been charged with his murder), police offered an amnesty to potential offenders who were prepared to hand in their "blades". Soon after, however, a 19-year-old youth was kicked and beaten to death by teenage thugs in Stratford-upon-Avon, and four police officers were assaulted in one evening in Birmingham by gangs wielding sledge-hammers, an iron bar and knives. One officer, a woman, sustained a fractured skill, and the others received lesser injuries.

Alarmed by the ferocity of these attacks, the West Midlands chief constable, Sir Ronald Hadfield, said it was time his officers had something better than batons to defend themselves with. The junior Home Office minister, Ann Widdecombe, said the Government agreed and had already given its support to trials of CS gas sprays.

Therein, however, lies the problem. Trials of CS gas, which began last year, were halted when a police instructor needed hospital treatment for eye burns after being sprayed. Pepper sprays pose even greater hazards.

Police chiefs are expected to approve the resumption of CS gas trials at a meeting later this month but there will, inevitably, be anxiety about the creation of a more militarist force that could further isolate itself from the community it is there to serve. Sir Ronald's officers may have to depend on their batons for a while yet.

A MAN of 85 was put into the dock of a magistrates' court in Surrey to face allegations about events that happened more than 50 years ago.

Szymon Serafinowicz, a retired carpenter, is the first British resident to be prosecuted as an alleged Nazi war criminal. It is claimed that he murdered three unknown Jews in Bielarus, the country of his birth, when the former Soviet republic was occupied by the Germans in 1941.

His prosecution was made possible by the War Crimes Act of 1991, pushed through by the Thatcher government. These initial committal proceedings, which cannot be reported, may alone cost £1.5 million.

LAST SATURDAY was solemnly described as "the most communal national experience since the VE-Day celebrations". It was the day when the National Lottery, now the world's biggest, offered record total prize money of £81.4 million, and a jackpot prize of £42 million, which was shared by three unnamed winners. The organisers, Camelot, reckoned that 90 per cent of the population had bought at least one ticket.

The big jackpot prize, "rolled over" from the two preceding weeks, was the trigger for the near-doubling of ticket sales from the normal weekly £65 million to £128 million. Tales abounded of an Australian syndicate staking £14 million, though this was thought to be a PR story dreamed up by Camelot.

A number of bishops voiced their unease. One said it was "not the British way", while another seemed to consider lottery gambling somehow more immoral than betting on horses or playing the football pools. Yet another shared a more general view that there should be a greater number of smaller prizes.

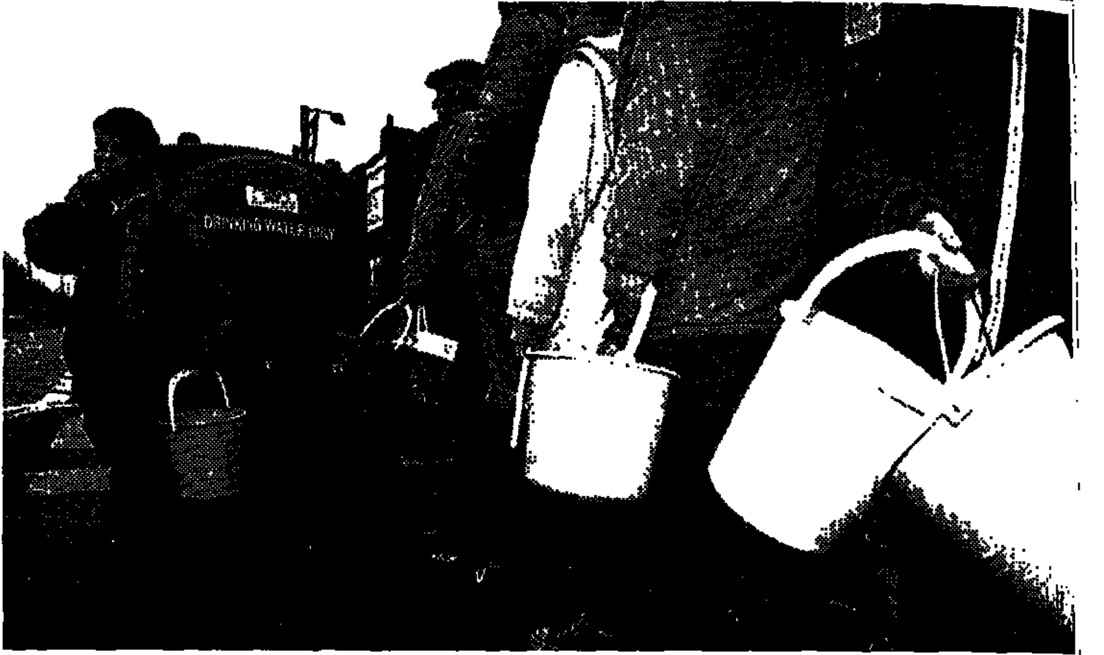
CONTROVERSY over the Care in the Community scheme was rekindled when two mentally ill men were separately convicted of killings carried out after they had been discharged, or given leave, from London hospitals.

Wayne Hutchinson, given leave from a hospital although he was on bail for firearms offences, was said to have gone on a "rampage of violence", fatally shooting and stabbing two people and injuring three others — all strangers. And Martin Murcell, released from psychiatric hospital where he was being treated for paranoid schizophrenia, murdered his step-father and stabbed his mother. Independent inquiries were ordered in both cases.

Patients once held in institutions are supposed to be discharged into the "community" only when doctors and social workers are satisfied it is safe to do so and that they can be properly supervised and cared for. But these two cases, and other murders by former in-patients, have fuelled criticism that the release scheme is poorly organised and under-funded.

ADMIRALTY ARCH, one of London's foremost landmarks, is not to be sold after all. News that a firm of estate agents had been asked to prepare an "options analysis" (to consider alternative uses for the building) provoked an enraged reaction from Admiral of the Fleet Lord Hill-Norton. The building, he declared, was an intrinsic part of Britain's maritime heritage, something he would have thought "even a little creep like Portillo [the Defence Secretary]" would have appreciated. The Government performed a swift handbrake turn and denied any plan to sell.





Buckets of trouble . . . Residents of Ashington, Northumberland, queueing for water PHOTO: OWEN HUMPHREYS

Insurers face huge burst pipes bill

BRITAIN's battered insurance market is facing the new burden of an estimated £500 million bill for damage caused by burst pipes and disrupted water supplies in the sudden new year thaw, *write Martin Wainwright and David Ward.*

The Government last week offered talks with local authorities on help for dealing with the clear-up, but ministers were cagey about whether that would include substantial funding. Army tankers have been deployed to help supply parts of Scotland still being disrupted — working in tandem with whisky lorries on loan.

Insurance offices in Scotland, Newcastle upon Tyne and Manchester have been inundated with claims. Some householders are videoing flood damage and pressing ahead with expensive repairs.

People affected by cut-offs will receive compensation payments of £10 per 24 hours without supply from the water companies, which will be required to make the payments from profits and not by increasing customer charges. The biggest payouts are expected in Ashington and Newbiggin on the Northumberland coast.

The Water Services Association said that temperatures in the North-east had gone from -10C to 3C overnight, imposing huge strains on the pipes and causing fracturing earth movements. The freeze had already expanded the water and contracted the metal, leading to cracks at vulnerable junctions.

● As a row raged over the privatised water companies' performance, it emerged that three of the directors of Northumbrian Water have received confirmation that they will share profits of more than £1 million from their share options as a result of the successful French takeover bid for the firm.

Lyonnaise des Eaux's takeover is set to add £567,000 to the expected remuneration package of £205,000 for Northumbrian's chief executive, David Cranston, in 1996.

Plan to raise UK's image as 'dunce of the world'

Donald MacLeod

A 10-YEAR plan to lift Britain from its place as the dunce of the developed world was outlined last week by the Government's former senior education adviser.

Sir Geoffrey Holland, former permanent secretary at the Department for Education, proposed a £1 billion programme to raise achievement over the next 10 years. He said Britain had slipped from 14th to 18th in a league of global competitiveness because of the quality of the work force and the inadequate education system.

In terms of skill the work force had slipped from 21st to 24th, while in education the UK was ranked 35th in the world despite spending more than many competitors.

Sir Geoffrey, vice-chancellor of Exeter university, told local authorities they would have to improve achievement in schools and colleges by 30 per cent with few extra resources. With two-thirds of public spending going to social security, because of an ageing population and high unemployment, education was fighting for scraps from the table.

"It is time for a national crusade to raise achievement all round," Sir Geoffrey said. He said A levels should be scrapped as no longer relevant. Vocational and academic qualifications should be amalgamated and taken whenever candidates reached a certain standard rather than at a certain age, to get rid of the stigma of failure.

Meanwhile Anthea Millett, chief executive of the Teacher Training Agency, told local authority leaders that the Government is to increase teacher training by half, to avoid a shortage as fewer people join the profession and thousands retire early.

Her admission that the target was "challenging" comes at an embarrassing moment for ministers, who are trying to hold the line on teachers' pay, a key factor in promoting the image of the profession.

The 25 per cent dropout rate among trainee teachers would have to be tackled, and it might be necessary to restrict early retirement to avoid difficulties by the end of the century, she said.

● Labour accused Gillian Shephard, Education and Employment Secretary, of lurching to the right of her predecessor, John Patten, in advancing proposals to allow state schools to select up to 15 per cent of its pupils on the basis of general ability.

"Parents will no longer choose their school; instead, schools will pick the parents and pupils," said David Blunkett, shadow education secretary.

Mrs Shephard was warned that this new guidance would clearly infringe legislation obliging schools to get government approval for any significant change of character.

Women-only shortlist illegal

Martin Wainwright Clare Dyer and Rebecca Smithers

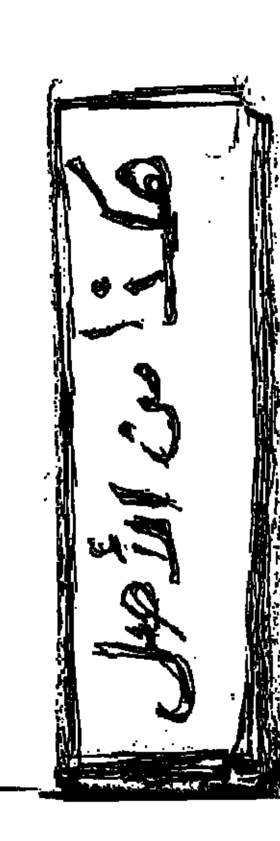
LABOUR'S controversial women-only shortlist policy was torpedoed on Monday in the unlikely forum of a Leeds industrial tribunal, heralding months of possible legal battles over one of the party's most radical internal reforms.

A three-strong panel ruled that confining the chance to fight parliamentary seats to one sex was contrary to the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, however well-intentioned the aim of increasing the total of women MPs. Of Labour's 270 MPs, 38 are women.

The party is likely to appeal, but has frozen selection in nine seats with women-only shortlists until it receives the full written judgment in the next two weeks. Thirty-four women candidates have been chosen by the party under the policy. A question mark hangs over a further five constituencies where the process of selecting a woman candidate was due to start soon.

The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats seized on the ruling as evidence of an "unfair" policy.

Diana Maddock, Liberal Democrat women's affairs spokeswoman, said: "Parliament would greatly benefit from having more women, but the way to achieve that is through a programme of positive action rather than positive discrimination."



In Brief

SHELL'S sponsorhip of the Royal Geographic Society should be ended immediately, the annual conference of British geographers demanded in an emergency resolution.

MICHAEL EAVIS, founder of the Glastonbury festival, cancelled this year's event, saying it needed a rest to recapture its original hippie spirit.

HALF OF the chemists investigated by the Consumers' Association sold the wrong drugs or failed to give the right advice, Which? magazine reported.

BRITAIN'S key intelligence co-ordinating job is to go to the chief policy adviser to Sir Leon Brittan, the UK's senior European Commissioner, in a shake-up of Whitehall posts.

EMMA NICHOLSON, the Tory MP who defected to the Liberal Democrats, vowed to fight on as MP for West Devon and Torridge in the face of calls for a byelection.

PAUL GRECIAN, the former arms dealer who first alerted the intelligence agencies to the Iraqi supergun, will remain in a South African jail until an American request for his extradition is heard later this month.

DAVID Hempleman-Adams, aged 39, completed a 680-mile solo walk to the South Pole, the first Briton to do so unaided.

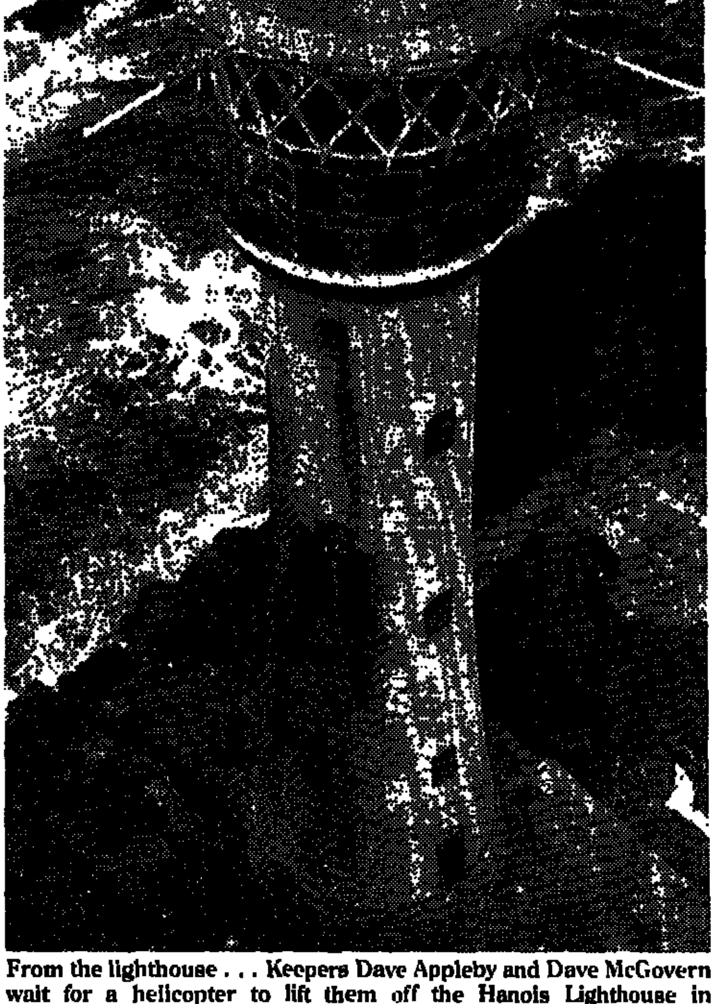
A CLAIM made in Granada TV's World in Action programme that Marks & Spencer was employing child labour in a Moroccan factory producing clothes for its high street shops, has been vigorously denied by David Sieff, the great-grandson of the chain's founder.

A FURORE over allegations of deliberate starvation, sexual assault and systematic medical malpractice in Chinese orphanages cast a pall over a fence-mending visit to Hong Kong and China by the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind.

Washington Post, page 15

RICHARD BRANSON, the millionaire entrepreneur, threatened to boycott the inquiry caused by his allegation that GTech had attempted to bribe him to pull out of the bidding to run the Lottery because the terms of reference by which the inquiry had been set up would not be perceived as independent.

LAND'S END and John o' Groats have come on the market together for the first time, giving someone with £5.5 million the chance to buy Britain's most northerly and westerly points. The New Zealand property company, Gulf Resources, is selling both sites in order to concentrate on investments back home.



From the lighthouse . . . Keepers Dave Appleby and Dave McGovern wait for a helicopter to lift them off the Hanois Lighthouse in Guernsey. It is the first in the British Isles to be fully automated by solar energy PHOTOGRAPH: KIERAN DOHERTY

US envoy back in Belfast

David Sharrock

HOPES are rising that the wave of IRA murders of petty criminals which has claimed five lives in as many weeks is drawing to a close, as the commission on illegal arms returns to Belfast this week.

Sinn Fein made its second comment in three days on the murders, after it was goaded by John Major into a response to his challenge to stop the killings. Mr Major's hard tone was prefaced by his belief that the murders would stop once the international body, led by President Clinton's envoy to Northern Ireland, George Mitchell, returns to the province and concludes its report.

Mr Major is likely to have made his assessment on the basis of briefings from Dublin about Sinn Fein and the IRA's intentions.

A Sinn Fein delegation met Irish government officials last week, after which the party's vice-president, Pat Doherty, said Sinn Fein was trying to halt the killings.

Mr Doherty also said he expected to be in talks with both the British and Irish governments by the end of the month. The tenor of his comments was in marked contrast to those made 10 days ago by his colleague, Mitchel McLaughlin, when he said that British intransigence could lead to a resumption of hostilities.

Dublin believes that the international body's report will lead to an ending of the killings and punishment beatings, and possibly to a stronger commitment by the IRA to maintaining its ceasefire, possibly along the lines of the loyalists' "no first strike" pledge.

Inmate chained in labour ward

HOLLOWAY women's prison in north London was at the centre of a new controversy last week as a secretly filmed TV news report showed a pregnant prisoner being chained and handcuffed every time she moved away from a hospital bed, before and after giving birth, *writes Vivek Chaudhary.*

Ann Widdecombe, the Home Office minister, defended the practice of manacling pregnant prisoners. "We have had one woman abscond when she was fairly well into her pregnancy," she said. "But we have an absolute rule that we don't handcuff women or restrain them while they are actually in childbirth."

Meanwhile, Janet King, the governor of Holloway, where an inspection last month discovered overzealous security and unacceptably dirty conditions, is to be transferred and replaced by Michael Sheldrick.

The revelation that women prisoners in Holloway were manacled was cited by Emma Nicholson as the factor which finalised her decision to defect from the Tories to the Liberal Democrats last month.

Blair unveils 'big idea' for economy

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Singapore and Michael White

TONY BLAIR this week unveiled his vision of a "stakeholder society", binding all parts of the community to a common national enterprise as the key to restoring Britain's fortunes and as the economic big idea that will help beat the Tories in the election.

The Labour leader chose a brief excursion into the economic powerhouse of Asia as the moment to provide Labour's answer to Conservative party sloganeering about making Britain "the enterprise centre of Europe".

"I want Britain to be a stakeholder economy where everyone has a chance to get on and succeed, where there is a clear sense of national purpose and where we leave behind some of the battles between left and right which really are not relevant in the new global economy of today," he said in Singapore.

Mr Blair's tour of Japan and Singapore — his first major visit outside Europe — was intended partly to show off "what an incoming Labour government looks like" and to reassure business by spreading New Labour's message on the dynamic Pacific Rim.

Spurred by the interest he feels he received from Japan's industrial barons, Mr Blair made a speech to Singapore's business community to present his "economic justification for social cohesion".

The main thrust of his argument is that "the creation of an economy where we are inventing and producing goods and services of high quality needs the engagement of the whole country".

This needs a relationship of trust between government and people, he reasons. If people feel they have no stake in the economy, they feel little responsibility for it and little inclination to work for its success.

Mr Blair said his party was studying Singapore's system of compulsory savings to see if Britain could learn from it to improve its own social security system.

"Our welfare state at the moment isn't functioning in the way that it should. It is neither helping those who are the poorest nor is it giving people the encouragement and incentive they need to get back into work."

Economists say the popular Central Provident Fund savings scheme, which forces workers to save 20 per cent of their income for pensions, medical care and insurance and then makes employers match the contribution, has been one of the keys to Singapore's phenomenal success.

These savings are channelled by the government as investment into industry and provide a constant flow of long-term money for spending on infrastructure like telecommunications and railways.

Mr Blair flew back to London from his whirlwind Asian tour on Monday night pursued by praise from the creators of Singapore's economic miracle and condemnation for his vision of a "stakeholder society" from the self-styled creators of Britain's.

While Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's former prime minister, heaped plaudits on the Labour leader — much as he once did for Harold Wilson and then Margaret Thatcher — Michael Heseltine led a cabinet hit squad targeting Mr Blair as an outdated corporatist.

"Of course I'm impressed," Mr Lee answered journalists. "He is young, energetic, doing well within the Labour party and the country."

As ministers in London struggled to obey John Major's edict to stop squabbling in public, Mr Heseltine said that the Conservatives had created the real stakeholder society in the 1980s when they sold shares, utilities and council houses.

He said: "Labour have fought us every step of the way. Who would be their stakeholders? The trade unions and the leftwing-dominated single issue pressure groups."

Michael Portillo said: "If this is his new idea, he's 16 years out of date."

Comment, page 12

Thwarting the grim reaper

Edward Pilkington

IT WAS a classic death, played with admirable conviction by a farmer's wife called Daphne Banks, aged 61. At least, until the plot strayed drastically from the script.

Mrs Banks's death began smoothly when she collapsed on New Year's Day in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, John Major's parliamentary constituency. All the usual stops were pulled.

The police were called and went through the motions of a routine operation. The local GP was summoned to pronounce Mrs Banks officially deceased.

Next, the undertakers arrived dressed, of course, in black. With due solemnity, they made the initial preparations of Mrs Banks's body and placed her on a stretcher.

The ambulance took Mrs Banks's body to Hinchingbrooke Hospital, where it was wheeled to the mortuary.

If the story had ended there, it could have been classified as a perfect death. But the attendants were astonished to see movement. To use more technical language, Mrs Banks was breathing.

William Goldby, area manager of funeral directors TL Cobbold of Hall Weston, said: "A member of my staff actually detected signs of life. He did not detect any sign of a pulse, but there was a rise and fall of the chest.

"This member of staff is a friend of Mrs Banks's family and he was already upset to hear of her death. The whole thing has been highly traumatic for him."

A "crash team" of doctors and medics trained to prevent death were then assigned the rather more onerous task of bringing her back from the dead. They succeeded.

After a spell in the emergency ward followed by intensive care, Mrs Banks is now recovering satisfactorily in a general ward.

Arms bosses' secret plot

Seumas Milne and Ian Black

BRITAIN'S biggest arms companies collaborated secretly with ministers, Whitehall officials and the CIA to find a way of "stifling" the Saudi opposition leader, Mohammed al-Mas'ari, according to a confidential report by the chief executive of the defence firm, Vickers.

The internal Vickers memorandum, written by Sir Colin Chandler — formerly head of arms exports at the Ministry of Defence — provides an extraordinary insight into the relationship between government and the defence industry and their common determination to neutralise the threat to multi-billion pound contracts posed by the presence of Saudi dissidents in London.

The memo, dated last September 6, reveals that Britain passed to Saudi Arabia secret intelligence on Saddam Hussein to appease Saudi anger over Mr al-Mas'ari's activities in London. The document also refers to "direct Saudi intervention" against the prominent Saudi dissident, and attempts to "stifle him personally".



Sir Colin Chandler (left), chief executive of Vickers, who wrote the memo, and Andrew Green, the next ambassador to Saudi Arabia

In a three-page note to David Hastie — Vickers's international relations director and another former MoD official — Sir Colin describes a discussion with Dick Evans, chief executive of British Aerospace, who reported anxiety in the CIA "and their counterparts in this country" about the impact of Mr al-Mas'ari's campaign against the Saudi royal family and the presence of western troops in the kingdom. As well as the exchanges with Mr Evans and Mike Rouse of British Aerospace, the Vickers memo refers to contacts with Sir David Lees, chairman of GKN, over the al-Mas'ari case. Based on the al-Yamamah deal signed by Margaret Thatcher in the mid-1980s, all three firms depend on huge Saudi deals or hope to attain them.

Vickers, British Aerospace, GKN and VSEL are negotiating aeronautical or defence sales worth £3 billion. Highlighting the symbiotic relationship between the arms firms and various branches of government, the Vickers memo records Sir Colin and BAe's chief executive proposing jointly that the Government try to "offset some of the Saudi criticism of us" by inviting President Saddam's son-in-law — who defected to Jordan last August — to Britain and then "feeding some of the intelligence back to the kingdom".

Sir Colin was later telephoned by Andrew Green — recently appointed British ambassador to Saudi Arabia — who told him that a British debriefing had already taken place in Amman and "material had been passed to both King Fahd and the Saudi foreign minister". This had "earned us many plaudits". It later emerged that Mr Green has been a non-executive director of Vickers since April 1994.

A Foreign Office spokeswoman said: "There's no conflict of interest. It's a very logical choice that Mr Green should be appointed ambassador to Riyadh and advise Vickers. It is a company that is interested in that part of the world. That does not suggest anything improper."

Weapons that cost a bomb to taxpayers

COMMENT
Richard Norton-Taylor

JOHN MAJOR's administration, like its predecessors, is obsessed with selling British weapons abroad. It has distorted its own human rights guidelines to sell arms to lucrative, mainly Middle East and Asian, markets. It has manipulated official criteria covering aid to persuade foreign governments to buy British weapons. It has even provided secret intelligence to countries, including Saudi Arabia, in the hope of future arms deals.

In 1989 the Government earmarked £234 million from the aid budget to Malaysia's Pergau dam project. The origins of the decision, subsequently ruled unlawful by the High Court, lay in Mrs Thatcher's promise to provide aid for the economically questionable project while negotiating an arms deal with Malaysia worth £1.3 billion. Per capita aid to Indonesia has more than quadrupled over the past 15 years in spite of its comparative wealth and continuing occupation of East Timor. The aid package coincided with Indonesia's agreement to buy British Aerospace Hawk aircraft with the prospect (recently realised) of further deals.

In 1985, Thatcher signed the unprecedented oil-for-arms al-Yamamah deal with Saudi Arabia, worth £2 billion a year. A National Audit Office report on the deal, including references to reports of alleged "kickbacks", has been suppressed. That same year Thatcher signed a £270 million Jordan defence package when the Government knew Jordan was a conduit for British arms to Iraq.

Labour MPs are acutely aware that it is easy to shout about the immorality of arms deals, but not so easy to see the jobs of their constituents being threatened.

Yet the World Development Movement, a leading Third World campaigning group, has unearthed a huge undeclared bill paid by British taxpayers for weapons exported to countries which are either rich or have an appalling human rights record, and sometimes both.

It found that at least £384 million a year is paid by the British taxpayer, not by foreign governments buying the weapons. In each of the five years up to 1995, the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD) had to pay out some £250 million to foot the bill for unpaid arms sales. The figures question the Government's claim that arms exports sustain 100,000 jobs in an industry which — despite the MoD's rhetoric — over the past decade has accounted for only 1.7 per cent of total British average annual exports.

Sixty per cent of ECGD guarantees devoted to arms sales were accounted for by the Middle East, according to the ECGD's latest annual report.

Saudi Arabia was top of the table for ECGD business in 1994, and now lies in second place after China.

Crude deals that buy our silence

Martin Woollacott deplores the West's dependence on Saudi oil and the compromises we make to retain it

ARMS and appeasement have long been twin themes in Britain's relationship with Saudi Arabia. It was the British gift of German rifles captured from the Turks which first tipped the tribal arms balance in the Arabian peninsula definitively in Ibn Saud's favour during the first world war.

Seventy years after the conquest of Mecca by Saudi forces, Britain is still in the business of supplying arms to the Saudis and its instinctive reflex is still to defer to the demands of Ibn Saud's descendants.

Dominica, of all places, is supposed to take the dissident who has earned Saudi wrath by his skilful exploitation of the fax machine and his ability to feed the information hunger of a society starved of reliable news. It is a bizarre solution to this particular instance of our dependence on the objectionable, difficult, and fragile regime of Saudi Arabia. One has only to imagine the difference had Mohammed al-Mas'ari been, say, a Syrian, Chinese, or Nigerian dissident to grasp how complete that dependence is.

British dependence on Saudi Arabia is only part of a general western dependence, a dependence made worse by the fact that the industrial countries relish any disadvantage suffered by one another in the scramble for Saudi money. In such a situation morality, common sense and the long-term interest of the West as a whole always suffer. It is that overall dependence that is the real scandal, the real problem, and the real difficulty.

Most people, including most intelligent Saudis — and including some enlightened members of the royal family — believe that long-term stability in Saudi Arabia can only be achieved through reform. Yet reform is a rarer commodity in Saudi Arabia than water in the desert, and the western pressure that might help bring it rarer still, because the Saudi ruling clan uses its power to purchase near absolute immunity from any form of criticism and from any urging of change.

Words like "feudal", phrases like "desert kingdom", conceal the reality. Saudi Arabia is neither feudal nor a true kingdom. It is an ascendancy of one family and one religious tendency over a patchwork of conquered territories, in all of which still live men and women who remember a time before the Saudis came.

The size of the royal clan is such that an estimated 40 to 45 new males are added to it every month, all of them convinced, as one British writer on Gulf affairs puts it, that they have a right to win the National Lottery every year. This cannot be the basis, unamended, of a polity that will survive. Saudi Arabia needs not so much democracy, which is far, far away, as to make a start in that direction by disciplining the royal clan, and giving a degree of political participation to the educated and the merchant class.

The Saudi regime has retained its appetite for military technology, long after the rationale for it has departed. The expensive weaponry the Saudis have bought from the United States, France, and Britain, is essentially useless. The Gulf war showed that Saudi Arabia did not have the capacity to defend itself except with American help. With all its money, it lacks the population base to be in the same military league as powers like Iraq, Iran, or Egypt.

The main function of this arms trade, which soaks up so much of Saudi wealth, however, is something different. It is a pay-off for western passivity, argue critics of the regime.

Saudi Arabia survives as it is because it pays off its western backers with, first of all, cheap oil and then with the huge arms, construction and other contracts for which the western countries so nakedly contend. This transaction, therefore, is not so much about arms, bridges, or telephone exchanges but about the immunity of the Saudi regime from western criticism and pressure on the one hand and the West's need for money on the other.

In the case of the Americans, Saudi Arabia is also seen as vital to that overall American dominance in the Middle East which has become so complete since 1989. In addition, the Americans calculate that Saudi Arabia must be kept sweet so that it can be brought in to cement any Arab-Israeli settlement with money and diplomatic recognition.

Thus it is that whenever the Saudis squeeze, something almost invariably gives in the West. Democratic countries who ought to be urging change not only do not do so but they even try to silence, as Britain is trying to do, Saudi critics abroad who have broken no laws. Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, who has recently taken over

Reform is rarer in Saudi Arabia than water in the desert, and western pressure that might help bring it is rarer still

because of the illness of King Fahd, has the reputation of being a decent man who may even try to introduce some reforms. But those who remember that Fahd himself came to the throne with a reforming reputation are not holding their breath.

On the other hand it would be foolish to argue that Saudi Arabia is close to some great crisis. The Suddeiris, the branch of the royal family who now hold most power, have their differences but seem likely to hold together. The opposition is divided and less than formidable. The car bombing of the American military office in Riyadh in November is not comparable in seriousness to the occupation of the Grand Mosque in 1979, or to some of the military rebellions of earlier years.

The educated classes are angry with the princes but not to the point of risking the chaos which radical political change might bring. The religious are divided but still mainly endorse Saudi rule. The location of oil in the eastern parts of the country means that other, historically restive, regions see the unity of a state they otherwise resent as vital. To some degree, the whole society has been compromised and co-opted. So the regime does have time — but the question is whether it is capable of using it.

The real weight of al-Mas'ari as an opposition figure is hard to measure. But what he has demonstrated is that there is a front on which the regime is open to challenge. He has countered the extraordinary Saudi dominance of the Arab press, much of which they own outright and nearly all of which they influence. Using the fax as a means of transmission and the formats of business journalism — newsletters and country and industry reports complete with charts and tables — for presentation, he has cut a swathe through Saudi information barriers.

Reports on economic tendencies and critiques of corruption are interspersed with lists of arrests, gossip, and Koranic interpretations. Operations like this cannot be stopped by the deportation of one man.

The British ministries, the intelligence services and the companies who have contributed to the decision, must all know this but nevertheless feel they must show willing to the Saudis. In truth we are playing to their fantasies and to their endless procrastination. Yet if the Saudi regime meets disaster at some future point, both the West and the Arab world would suffer. The Americans may trust to their military capacity in the Gulf to set things right but it may not be so easy to do so.

The problem is that Saudi Arabia needs to reform and is unlikely to do so unless there is western pressure. Yet this understanding always gives way before the reality of Saudi money and power and the competitiveness of western countries who are both its patrons and its clients. This is the vicious circle that the case of Mohammed al-Mas'ari so dismally illustrates.

Digging for victory

As the bailiffs move in to dislodge the Newbury bypass protesters from their entrenched camps, **Alex Bellos** charts the changing face of dissent

FOR SUCH an otherwise unremarkable town, Newbury boasts a strangely rich history of civil disobedience. Twice, Oliver Cromwell's Roundheads fought the Cavaliers there during the civil war that eventually deposed the monarchy. Three centuries later the gentle, wooded Berkshire countryside has again become the backdrop for particularly contemporary conflicts.

The women camped at Greenham Common, to the south east of the town, formed one the most powerful images of protest in the 1980s. But the US air base has long gone, along with its nuclear warheads, and the focus of attention has shifted to a nine-mile stretch to the west.

The lines are already drawn for the so-called Third Battle of Newbury, which this time pits bailiffs against road protesters. It could spark off any day, when cranes and bulldozers move in on communities of hundreds of people, living in wigwams, benders and treehouses along the route of the proposed A34 bypass. Applications for eviction were handed to some of the camps on December 20.

Since the Dongas tribe inaugurated anti-road direct action protest at Twyford Down near Winchester in 1992, the sight of dreadlocked campaigners being forcibly removed from the paths of new roads has become a common phenomenon. But Newbury is different. The project is more controversial. The protest as a result will be bigger and more violent.

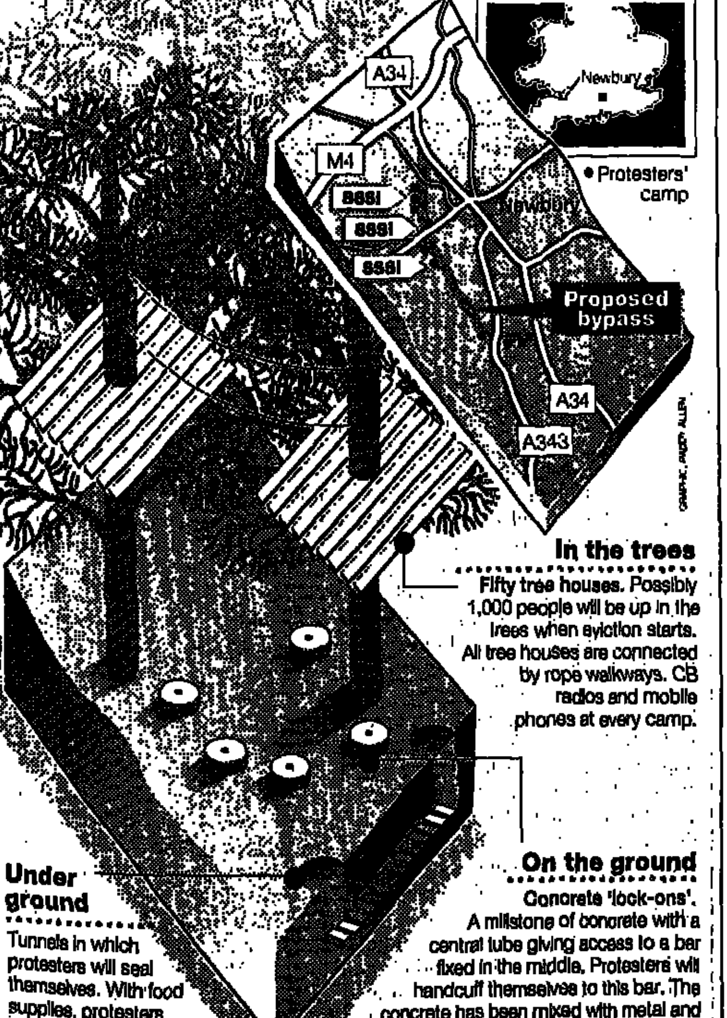
The protesters feel they have won the moral argument against the post-war culture of road building. Public opinion has certainly moved in their direction. Perhaps the Government has, too, for in the Budget last November Chancellor Kenneth Clarke announced massive cuts in the road programme (although this was more likely simply a move to help finance the penny cut in income tax, rather than evidence of a new transport strategy). The timing was impeccable, however — only the day before the Budget the final £66 million Newbury bypass go-ahead was given.

Badger, aged 24, was the first protester to live on the bypass route. He pitched up 18 months ago and his solitary dwelling has grown into a network of three camps on Snelsmore Common, one of three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) the road will slice through.

The Snelsmore camps — postal address Pixie Village — make up the largest of the evergrowing number of protest colonies spreading along the route. The ninth and most southern was started at the end of last month at Penwood; three protesters climbed the 100ft oak trees to tie wooden beams for treehouse bases.

But it is at Snelsmore that the protesters are set to give their most heroic resistance. Many there are veterans of previous protests, and they are constantly thinking up new ways to stop the digging. After experiments at various other sites, Newbury for the first time properly introduces some tactics of the Vietcong to British road protest.

If tree-village life is straight out of Tolkien, then beneath the surface is The Great Escape. When the bailiffs come, some men have agreed to hide down a tunnel built 10ft under the camp. "I will get down there, dig some more and use the landfill to block up the entrance," says the local man who built it in 40 days. "We have food stored down there and I think I can probably stay down for a month. It depends how grim it gets. There are air-holes, but I think the body also needs light. Otherwise you go mad."



Work in all the camps is intensifying as the evictions draw closer. It is bitterly cold and the only sounds are the chopping of wood and the occasional shout for help by a protester building in a tree. People are more difficult to evict when they are off the ground and the aim at Snelsmore — as in previous protests — is to have as many as possible living in treehouses. Each of the three camps will eventually be linked by walkways — two parallel ropes between trees — dozens of feet in the air.

The wealth of treehouse-making skills is evident from their number and diversity. There are about 50 along the route, some with glass windows, others with pine walls and chrome-style chimneys. The "mothership", by the river Kennet, is the largest protest treehouse in Europe.

Badger says they have new tactics to thwart eviction and that there will be so many protesters that it will be possible to immobilise them 100ft above the ground. "The trees are our domain. We just need the volume of people with the knowledge of climbing," he says. "All the bailiffs try to do is clip one of their lines on to us and then belay us down. We can do that, too. We will be clipping other lines to them and then lowering them down."

His treemen friends around him — in the uniform of a harness jangling with karabiners — are silently looking forward to the struggle. The bailiffs are also likely to be veterans of previous protests, with the specialised climbing skills required.

On the ground, some protesters will be trying out new techniques of "lock-ons" — blocks of concrete with a hole to put one's hand in. The hand is then handcuffed to a metal pole at the bottom of the hole. Glass, rubber and metal are often mixed in with the concrete to hinder the drills the bailiffs need to free the locked-on protesters. One 19-year-old girl said it took bailiffs more than seven hours to remove her lock-on at Thanet last year.

The Newbury camps boast a more sophisticated network of communication than previous road protests. Each camp has a CB walkie-talkie to be in constant touch with a co-ordinating office in Newbury, staffed by local volunteers and funded by Friends of the Earth. Some protesters have mobile phones. But the most legendary weapon in their armoury is a phone-tree — a series of lists of phone numbers of thousands of local people, and still growing daily. On the first day of the evictions, an "aruga" will be issued, activating the tree with the message of where to mobilise immediately.

Although protests have not so far stopped a single road being built, the protesters have witnessed a sea change in attitudes towards the issues they are fighting for, and especially in public perception of themselves. Perhaps this is a result of high profile figures, such as Bel Mooney at Batheaston, supporting their aims and tactics. Perhaps it comes from the demonstrations against veal exports a year ago, in which middle-class housewives joined more radical elements of the animal welfare movement.

Although protests have not stopped a single road being built, they have seen a sea change in public opinion

What is undeniable is that the crusty, dirty image of the 1980s protester has enjoyed an ethical and cultural makeover. This widening support can be seen in the broad spectrum of people camping along the Newbury route. At the camp by the river Kennet the residents included a young market research executive. In July, she picked up a hitchhiker who invited her to have a look at the Newbury camp. She returned every week and has just left her job to live there full-time.

Also at Kennet were a 35-year-old unemployed man from Southampton; a 19-year-old woman from Peterborough who decided to spend her year off before university travelling from one road camp to another; and a 30-year-old mental health worker from Newcastle who is taking some of his annual holiday to live at the camp.

The reason they all give for being there is a passionate belief in the protection of nature. But despite an evident feeling of mutual respect, there is little sense of community. There are no leaders or structures. Most people drift between sites.

"We are here just to try and stop the destruction," said a 38-year-old former environmental worker. "It's not fun. Now it's cold, and tree eviction is a traumatic experience. It's like someone kicking your home down."

Doesn't he feel it's all rather futile, as the protest will almost certainly be defeated? "Money is the only language they understand, so we have made it ours. If we delay the road it costs them more money. And this might mean they can't afford other roads." The protesters live off a combination of donations and dole. None has much money: on average they survive on £10 ($15) a week.

As well as the migrant protesters attracted to the camps, there is a solid base of locals against the bypass. Helen Anscomb, a comprehensive school Latin teacher in her forties, started campaigning against roads in 1979. She was the original objector at the 1988 public inquiry, and is currently taking the Government to the European Court to try to have the road stopped.

When the bypass was first given the go-ahead in 1994 she founded the Third Battle of Newbury, which became an umbrella for all the campaigning groups. It spawned the phone tree — her own numbers to call are stuck on her wall at home — but the disparate and headstrong nature of the supporters has left it without leaders or a plan of action. She says: "Our strength is that nobody knows who we are or what we are going to do. In fact, we don't know who we are or what we are going to do." But, she adds, when push comes to shove, thousands will turn up to stop the bailiffs.

In all the argument over the bypass, the one undeniable fact is that Newbury has a traffic problem. The Highways Agency claims that 50,000 vehicles a day currently use the A34, paralysing the town centre. Those in favour of the new road — which includes an overwhelming majority of local people, according to the agency — believe that it will remove 70 per cent of the 480 lorries an hour passing through the town.

The strongest argument against it, put forward by Friends of the Earth, is not that it will destroy parts of three SSSIs and two archaeological sites. It is that the road is pointless. The organisation says its surveys show that most of the traffic is local, that the bypass will at first have only a marginal effect, and by 2002 traffic levels will be back to where they are now. There are also quibbles with the procedures that the Government followed, although any verdict on that by the European Court is unlikely to come before the road is already built.



Branching out . . . Widening support is reflected in the broad spectrum of followers PHOTO: ANDREW TESTA

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Britain gives in to blackmail

THERE IS no mystery about the real reason for deporting the Saudi dissident Mohammed al-Mas'ari to Dominica instead of considering his application for asylum. He has not breached any condition for political refugee status. It is not suggested that he is breaking British law or promoting terrorism. No one has cast doubt on his claim to have a well-founded fear of persecution if he returns to Saudi Arabia. He was jailed and tortured for political protest in Saudi Arabia and is continuing to protest in the same vein. Indeed his application for asylum has not been examined at all: it has been refused "without substantive consideration of the claim".

The reason why Mr al-Mas'ari is being banished to a Caribbean Elba was set out with total clarity by the Home Office minister Ann Widdecombe in the following terms: "We have close trade relations with a friendly state [ie, Saudi Arabia] which has been the subject of considerable criticism by Mr al-Mas'ari." Are Ms Widdecombe's listeners to recoil in horror? So an applicant for British asylum has criticised this wholly undemocratic, repressive state which has arrested hundreds for their political or religious activities and routinely inflicts cruel and inhuman punishment. How dare he! No, even Ms Widdecombe cannot expect such a response. There is no reason why asylum seekers should refrain from political activity, so long as it is non-violent and is not illegal in Britain. Neither the 1951 UN Convention nor the subsequent UNHCR guidance to states make any such stipulation.

The answer, simply, is that the UK government is scared witless by the prospect of upsetting the Saudis. There was some surprise that Ms Widdecombe should have confirmed this so openly, but her only alternative was to keep quiet. Deporting Mr al-Mas'ari to a third country is not, as it happens, a breach of international law, though the practice has been expressly opposed by the UNHCR. The host country should consider an application for asylum, and then either accept or reject it. Instead Britain has refused consideration while finding another country which will not only receive Mr al-Mas'ari's application but has promised in advance to accept it. The result is that Britain looks ludicrous and craven at the same time.

The blatant admission of a political motive behind this decision may strengthen Mr al-Mas'ari's case for appeal or judicial review. The nature of Mr al-Mas'ari's views as an Islamist who advocates Shari'a law is beside the point — and not only because Saudi Arabia is already an Islamic state where the same law is arbitrarily applied. Asylum is not granted only to those whose views we applaud.

There remains the Government's appeal to self-interest of the narrowest kind. Protection of British jobs would be a more noble cause if it had been pursued elsewhere with equal enthusiasm to prevent the rundown of UK industries. Besides, the linkage of trade and politics — normally opposed by the Government — creates a dangerous precedent. Britain will be seen as more open to blackmail by trading partners who object to political criticism — and there are plenty of them.

North Korea on the breadline

THE NEWS that more than 20 million North Koreans are going hungry has not yet greatly moved the rest of the world. It is time it did. Korea remains a far-off country both geographically and because of its political isolation. But there are good practical reasons for helping Pyongyang quite apart from the moral obligation to save millions from malnutrition or worse.

The excuse that too little is known about what is really going on in North Korea — and therefore that the dimensions of the present crisis cannot be properly gauged by potential donors — no longer holds. With growing realism, no doubt spurred by desperation, Pyongyang officials have allowed UN agencies exceptional access to rural areas which are normally closed. Quantities of data have been provided and old Pyongyang hands are amazed by the speed with which inquiries are now often answered. The food problem goes far beyond the immediate effects of floods. The picture is one of a country which has been brought to the verge of exhaustion over the past few years, and where another bad year could tip it over the edge. Mismanagement has played a part, but a significant factor has been the loss of Chinese and (former) Soviet support for a country whose agriculture depends heavily on inputs of fertiliser and fuel.

Some will argue that the Kim Il-sung dynasty, now continued by his son Kim Jong-il, deserves to collapse. Yet even in Seoul it is realised that this would be a disaster for the whole Korean peninsula and perhaps beyond. The disparity between North and South is too great: the flight of refugees southwards would be overwhelming. Surrounded by three great powers (Russia, China and Japan) the destabilisation of Korea would create new competition and insecurity in East Asia.

Pyongyang's deification of the Kim dynasty over many decades has not only lost friends but consumed vast amounts of scarce resources. There is no doubt that it has warped decision-making and paralysed initiatives among officials who must prove they are loyal before all else. But the mood of adulation has waned. The younger Kim appears to lead a reform-minded stratum in the Workers' Party which favours opening to the outside world against the opposition of army headliners from the old generation.

South Korea has taken the lead, for obvious reasons, in cultivating the image of an unpredictable Pyongyang. Understanding the North is not really so hard, and visitors to both countries notice similarities in their political cultures. Seoul has recently argued that the North's "military threat" is increasing — a view uncritically echoed last week by Michael Portillo. Yet a military adventure seems wholly implausible for this exhausted country.

The World Food Programme has been struggling to secure enough aid. It is a desperate situation. Only a handful of countries have answered the appeal and Britain is one of many still considering its response. History should remind us that North Korea is not such a distant place.

Blair stakes out his ground

TONY BLAIR's speech to Singapore businessmen this week marks a milestone in the evolution of New Labour's ideas from a portfolio of policies into a coherent philosophy. Just as in the 1960s Harold Wilson used the prospect of a new society forged in the "white heat" of technology to divert the party faithful from nationalisation, so Mr Blair is trying to infuse the party with a new binding moral imperative to replace the dying embers of collectivisation.

The Stakeholder Economy is in one sense simply a portmanteau word to embrace a large number of individual initiatives — from putting the long-term unemployed back to work to providing portable pensions — but it is also an attempt to communalise Labour's project and to sublimate the economic insecurity which global economic change, aggravated by Thatcherism, has brought about and to which there may be no instant solution. Where Mrs Thatcher offered a share-owning democracy, Mr Blair offers rich and poor a seductive stake in education, welfare, information technology, and corporate governance. All the ideas have powerful antecedents, but gathering them under one all-embracing concept is more than a mere political necessity. If there is one Old Labour virtue that unashamedly shines through, it is equality of opportunity.

New Labour needs a moral imperative because there is no magic wand which a fiscally cautious Blair government can wave. It will probably inherit the best macro-economic framework of any Labour administration, but that won't stop the global economy from marginalising the concept of a secure job. Once globalisation is accepted, it is difficult to turn back the globe on which you turn. Cynics can reel out a depressing catalogue of pre-electoral panaceas which never fulfilled their promise, including nationalisation, privatisation, monetarism and reduced government spending. However, the daunting nature of the problem should not prevent fresh solutions being tried. New Labour's macro-economic policy won't be much different from John Major's and its headroom will be even more constrained if it signs up for the single European currency. Changing society itself may be beyond the power of one man or one government, but merely to alter direction from the self-interested, anti-communitarian cul-de-sac along which the nation has been bounced against its will would be a liberation worth waiting for.

Major gambles with his place in history

Hugo Young

OPTIMISM is the professional deformity of the governing politician, just as scepticism is that of the journalist. Our views on whether the glass is half-empty or half-full are predictable. In this apportionment of attitude, moreover, I thank God for the optimists even while doing what I can to contest their certainties and demolish their reassurance. Ministers are necessary beings, and could not do their job unless they rode over every gloomy prediction, of which there were thousands, about the unpopularity of privatisation, and every objection, including mine, to the next round of tax cuts at the expense of a decent education system. Pessimism ices politics into paralysis.

The most necessary optimist is the Prime Minister, any prime minister. John Major, who believes that his predicament can only abate, is in a job where every predecessor has found it necessary to believe the same thing. Harold Macmillan, abandoning belief in 1963, left office on a medical pretext which his doctors almost immediately discounted. He had had enough. James Callaghan, clinging to it in 1978, convinced himself that the wicket was bound to improve, and then presided over the election that closed the innings for British socialism.

So it is today. Examining their position, ministers believe it has nowhere to go but up. They think time must be on their side. The past and present having dealt them such unmerited rejection, the future can only bring the people to their senses. Thirty per cent adrift of Labour, Mr Major thinks he owes it to country and party to await the recovery that beckons. And convention supports what passes, in these straitened times, for optimism.

On this occasion, however, convention is almost certainly wrong. Optimism is fantasy. For the party's good it is mere ritual, for the country's self-deceiving calamity. If the Government keeps itself alive through 1996, things can in fact only get worse. The cost of hanging on will, from every point of view save that of office-holding panjandrums, be a heavy tax on the national interest.

It will, first, set at risk some good things the Government has done. The stultifying of the Irish peace process may not be entirely due to concessions London is making to the Ulster Unionists. Major has his own stubborn revulsion from letting the IRA dictate terms. But if his extended life this year depends, as it will, on sibylline understandings with the Ulster Unionists' David Trimble, all denied but all effective, then Ulster, from being the nettle he boldly grasped, will become the body disposed of by a dose of hemlock, the last sacrifice of a desperate opportunist. It won't be exactly like 1974, when another Ulster peace was the casualty of mainland politics. But it will show to Ireland the same, as it turns out futile, priorities.

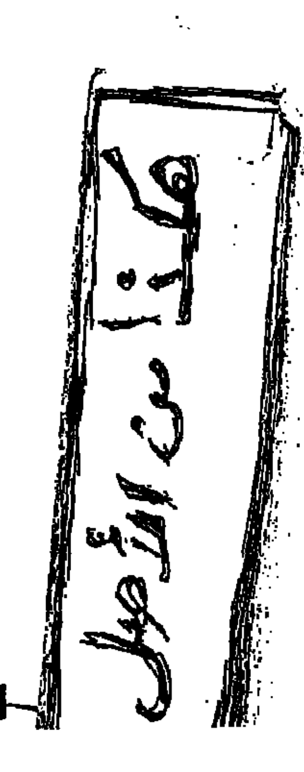
Clinging on also makes impossible the most important things the country needs a government to do. This will not merely be an administration that can't rely on getting its measures through Parliament. Since so much of what it proposes was conceived in panic and produced in defiance of most evidence and all relevant expertise, that will be small loss.

But Europe asks the great national question of the moment, which the Major government is incapable of answering. As this year unfolds, every member of the European Union will be engaged in the slow, delicate business of negotiating Europe's future shape. For Britain the task will be in the hands of a cabinet that is forced, by its irreconcilable divisions, to play a role which ranges between the negative and the destructive. With the Tory left at last beginning to show that it is not, after all, clinically invertebrate, Major knows that he can't allow Britain's hidden hand at the Intergovernmental Conference to be played by Mr Portillo. The continentals will have no choice but to delay conclusions until Britain sends a credible leader to the table. So delay in Europe, like delay in Ireland, is to be the salient gift bequeathed in these extended death-throes. Meanwhile, as the IGC meets and meets again, every rumoured movement will be marked in Britain by the knee-jerk savageries of Tory rivals who are competing to possess the corpse.

TO SHORE up this existence, there will need to be further debasements of politics, further posturings to try to repel inexorable decline. You can hear them already. See, on the horizon, the revival of old Communists in Russia and the possible appearance of an old Soviet general to lead them against Boris Yeltsin, and what is the response of our present-day statesmen? To jack up the tired old line that Tony Blair, as a former member of CND, must never be trusted with the nation's defences. There will be plenty more of this: plenty more of Mr Heseltine spitting in the wind, Dr Mawhinney lamely announcing another re-launch, all of them apparently immune to the piteous embarrassment that now dilutes the ridicule and hatred they evoke among most who watch them.

This will be the pattern of the year, unless it is interrupted by an election. It is masked by the conventional pretence that just a few more weeks or months are needed to turn the wheel of fortune round. The myth persists, nurtured by its beneficiaries and encouraged by the restraints of caution under which the media operate, that the Prime Minister is not only empowered but fully entitled to remain in office for the duration. I don't think there's been a time when that claim was more obviously flawed, more thoroughly inimical to the national interest — more patently discomforting, one might also have thought, to the equilibrium and self-esteem of a Prime Minister who has for some time been considering his place in history.

A general election in 1996 is about as likely as a byelection in West Devon: that is, entirely improbable, but always subject to individual caprice. Mr Major is by no means as loose a cannon as Emma Nicholson, whose only future lies in re-winning her seat as a Liberal Democrat. Alongside incorrigible optimism stands righteous self-belief. But the time has come to abandon, with the shreds of grace, both.



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France's poisoned Pacific paradise

Tahitians face a paradox as France prepares for its last Moruroa blast: they want tests to end but not the cash hand-outs from Paris, writes **Andrew Higgins**



No Eden . . . A protester pictured against the flames during last September's anti-nuclear protests in Tahiti

MORT pour La France: under the glower of an extinct volcano, the tombstones march in neat rows up a gentle slope, carrying epitaphs of empire towards an abrupt, chaotic frontier of bougainvillaea and wild tropical shrub. Perched on the fringes of Faaa, a raucous jumble of slum, suburb and beach resort near Tahiti's international airport, the Cimetière de l'Uranie struggles to keep up appearances.

Amid exuberant tributes to servants of France's most far-flung colonial adventure stands a more reticent memorial. It offers no consoling epitaph, only bare names carved in black marble. And it is here, each Friday afternoon, that a bitter 65-year-old spinster named Iris Drollet lays bunches of flame-red Tahiti ginger flowers — and mutters curses at Marlon Brando: "He came here with all his money and destroyed everything. Tahiti was Brando's little dream, his fantasy. But when it turned bad he wanted nothing to do with it. For him, *c'est fini*. He doesn't set foot here any more."

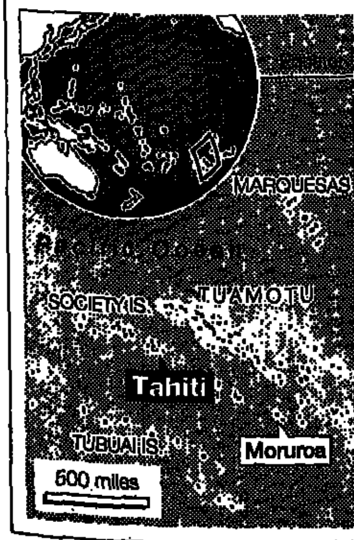
The grave is inscribed with the names of her nephew, Dag Drollet, and his lover, Cheyenne Brando. There is no attempt to explain how or why they died. No "mort pour La France".

In the case of Dag, the task of trying to make any sense of what happened — a single fatal bullet through his left cheek in 1990 — was left to a court in Los Angeles. Swayed by the elaborate arguments of celebrity lawyer Robert Shapiro (later of O J fame) it sentenced Brando's son, Christian, to only 10 years for accidental manslaughter.

How Cheyenne came to be entombed at the age of 25 is more straightforward. She hanged herself last April with a telephone cord just a few miles down the coast.

But it is not only Brando's Tahiti dream that has turned sour. With a neat symbolism a script-writer might admire, Cheyenne's broken neck betokened a larger crisis of identity reaching far beyond the personal tragedy of a bloated Hollywood ego run amok.

Four months after Brando's daughter hanged herself, Tahiti itself succumbed to a spasm of self-destructive rage, which began in protest at France's resumption of nuclear tests in the South Pacific. Now Tahiti, part of the French overseas territory of French Polynesia, faces a new trauma: the end of the tests. President Jacques Chirac confirmed last week that France would carry out one more Pacific test in its series of six before the end of February. What, Tahitians wonder, does their post-nuclear future hold?



"Danger de Mort," warns a sign attached to the chain-link fence of the French military camp not far from the cemetery. A translation gives the same message in Tahitian.

Apart from the tropical foliage, the main road, built to ferry tourists to and from the nearby airport, could be the shopping street of a slightly rough neighbourhood just about anywhere in France. But turn down a dirt track, and France and its language vanish in a heap of metal shelters, battered thatched huts and fetid beer halls clogged with jobless Polynesian youths.

"The young people worry me. They are not the same. They are aggressive, not like before. Perhaps it is just a new generation," says George Pittman, pastor of the evangelical church. More than half the population is under the age of 20.

The mayor and master of Faaa is Oscar Temaru, a soft-spoken former seminary student at the head of an anything but soft-spoken independence movement. He curses France with as much bile as Iris Drollet deploys against Brando.

"They destroyed our country. This used to be an unpolluted paradise. Now it is known around the world as a polluted place," he says. "Who polluted it? The French government. It makes no difference whether they are socialist or rightwing. They are all the same. They are all guilty."

But the stark limits of his authority are clearly visible from his mayoral office window. Behind a wire fence runs the runway of Tahiti's airport, the starting point for last September's riots but now back in service as a staging post for a faltering tourist industry and a booming nuclear archipelago of military and research installations across French Polynesia.

It is all a long way from the sunny scene that greeted the first Frenchmen to visit Tahiti in 1768. As their ship neared the coast after six months at sea, a topless Polynesian girl paddled alongside in a canoe. She climbed on to the deck, untied her sarong and stood stark naked under the delirious gaze of the crew.

"I thought I was transported into the Garden of Eden," recorded the vessel's captain, Louis Antoine de Bougainville.

In that moment stirred a steamy fantasy that would launch a thousand cruise ships, bewitch artists, actors and poets, and, in a final spasm of anything-goes abandon, impregnate the South Pacific with the poison of 190 French nuclear blasts.

More than 11,000 miles from Paris, Tahiti became a guilt-free zone, a distant playground bound by no taboo. Paul Gauguin, stockbroker turned painter, could take a 14-year-old lover; Marlon Brando and the rest of an MGM film crew could indulge themselves with a gusto rare even in Hollywood; and Jacques Chirac could ignore the censure of the world to assert France's nuclear virility.

De Bougainville, honoured by the eponymous tropical flower, is today remembered in official history as Tahiti's heroic founding father. His portrait hangs in the office of the French high commissioner on la rue du General de Gaulle; his bust, disfigured by an anti-nuclear sticker, looks out to sea from a palm-fringed waterfront of Papeete, the capital of French Polynesia.

But there was little romance in the way France first secured Tahiti as a full colony. After a century of imperial sparring across the South Pacific with Britain, it bribed Tahiti's drunken king, Pomare V. In 1880, he signed away his kingdom in return for a 5,000 franc-a-month pension.

"From the start we have been bought like cheap hookers," says Nelson Ortas, the fiery American-educated lieutenant of Oscar Temaru.

BUT THE real problem was never money itself but the deception and dislocation that came with it. When MGM moved here in 1961 to film its remake of Mutiny On The Bounty it spent vast amounts of money to blur reality so as to make Tahiti fit Hollywood's own vision of what paradise ought to look like. Aghast to find black sand on a beach chosen for shooting, producers hired lorries to transport white sand from across the island. Confronted with the rotting, stained teeth of the film's Tahitian extras, MGM ordered 5,000 pairs of temporary dentures. In all, it spent more than $20 million.

No sooner had MGM left than French scientists, soldiers and contractors poured in with even more cash to establish the Centre d'Expérimentation du Pacifique (CEP), France's nuclear weapons testing agency. The first atom bomb was exploded in 1966, 750 miles south-east of Tahiti on a barge moored at Moruroa atoll.

The biggest shock, though, was felt in Tahiti, the largest of 130 islands and atolls scattered across a French-ruled expanse of ocean bigger than western Europe. "When de Gaulle started testing, the French had a choice," says Stanley Cross, lawyer and chairman of Tahiti's Human Rights League. "They could either use arms or they could buy us off. They chose the latter. For 30 years we had everything we needed, billions and billions of francs."

Soldiers, civil servants and fortune-hunters stampeded in from Paris. Expatriate salaries were high and taxes all but non-existent. A tiny French population ballooned to more than 20,000. At the same time, Polynesians migrated en masse from remote islands across the South Pacific, many ending up in Faaa.

Again, problems were rarely solved, only masked. The transfer of France's nuclear tests to the South Pacific from the less docile French territory of Algeria meant another bonanza for false teeth merchants. Like MGM, foreign legionnaires gave them to their dentally-disadvantaged girlfriends — and demanded them back when they left.

Much the same methods were employed to conceal the scars of testing itself: thick layers of concrete and asphalt now smother contaminated coral on Moruroa — or "place of the big secret" in local dialect.

The biggest secret was never the tests, but their consequences. Greenpeace has documented dozens of cases of illness. Fifty-six former test-site workers recently signed a letter alleging a French colonial cover-up. But denied access to full medical records and Moruroa itself, anti-nuclear activists have never entirely disproved French claims that an increase in cancer cases is the result of an increase in the consumption of tobacco and alcohol.

To keep the French flag flying over the less truculent patches of French Polynesia and French nuclear bombs exploding at Moruroa, Paris now pumps in nearly £1 billion a year. Government long ago replaced fishing as the main industry; around 40 per cent of the workforce draws a state salary.

"France has a special conception of the mission she must accomplish in her overseas territories," intones Gaston Flosse, regional president and a close friend of Jacques Chirac. "When Anglo-Saxons discover that something does not work any longer or becomes too much of a burden, you say: sort it out yourselves, we have other, much more important problems at home. France is not the same. It says if you need us, you are citizens just like us, we are ready to accompany you until you ask us to leave."

The heart of the matter, though, is entirely Anglo-Saxon in its crude utilitarianism. And no one knows more about this side of France's "special conception" than Mr Flosse, the son of a French settler and Tahitian mother.

"We have had lots of luck," he says, sitting in an office filled with photographs of Mr Chirac and Charles de Gaulle. "First we had the Bounty. That brought in lots of money. Then we had the CEP. This also brought in money. The question now is where will the money come from once the testing stops?"

His home, a hilltop mansion, looks out across a manicured lawn shaded by a gigantic French flag towards a luxury beach hotel owned by one of his sons. Other family assets include a 19th century hotel in Paris's 16th arrondissement and properties in North America.

HOW DOES a former teacher who has spent his entire career in public service amass such wealth? "I am 64 years old," says Mr Flosse, "I have worked very hard. My wife and children all work. They have all worked very hard. I don't say I'm poor but, enfin, if I have succeeded it is because of my hard work and nothing else."

He has been investigated — and cleared — 12 times for corruption. Two new cases are still pending. All accusations of corruption are referred to Paris for investigation. Altogether about 50 local politicians are under investigation for graft of one sort or another. "This may be a part of France but it sometimes operates a lot like Africa," says the state prosecutor, Jean-Pierre Dreno.

The quid pro quo in all this is simple. In return for a steady flow of cash from Paris, Mr Flosse — and each of his predecessors — has given France a free hand to detonate nuclear devices.

"The one thing that is clear is that the tests are not dangerous, either for the environment or the population. You can see how we live in Papeete," Mr Flosse says loyally.

But how do they live just down the road in Faaa? The problem is not simply poverty. There are many poorer places in the South Pacific. France has provided hospitals and schools far superior to anything found elsewhere in the region.

The problem is more that many people "don't know who or where they are any more," says Mr Dreno. "They have no work . . . they speak Tahitian badly and also speak French badly. They are completely marginal."

Tahiti seems as confused about its identity and future as Cheyenne Brando. It too is trapped in a power relationship cash alone cannot fix.

With only one test still to go and France now committed to a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing later this year, the money-for-favours contract that has both enriched and tormented Tahiti will soon expire. Mr Flosse says Paris has promised funds for a further 10 years.

But how long will France really want to bankroll a paradise lost it no longer needs? For as ex-president Valery Giscard d'Estaing once muttered contemptuously: "These are expensive little dancers."

Educated guesses are wide of mark

A better trained workforce is a fine ideal but will not in itself generate growth, argues **Will Hutton**

THE BETTER trained and educated the workforce, the better the performance of the economy and the more just the society. Although such protestations are self-evident and a well-trained workforce is a necessary condition for growth, it is not sufficient. So what else has to be done?

Education and training is one area of policy where the Labour leader talks — as he did in Tokyo last week and in Singapore on Monday — confidently and crusadingly.

In a world in which barriers to capital moving across national borders are falling, Tony Blair argued, the only way for a less mobile workforce to empower itself is to offer ever more creativity and productivity — and that means more education and training. Britain, he declared, had to be the knowledge capital of Europe.

This is a noble and just cause. Even if there were few economic advantages, education and training are public goods, and Britain has for too long not given them priority. But there is a danger that by so elevating education and training's economic importance they are given the status of a growth theory in their own right.

There is no disputing the value of education and training, but recent research is sobering about how much they can achieve by themselves. The necessary expenditure to close income inequality, raise skill levels and lower unemployment is vast but the pay-offs are slow.

Even quality education cannot save an economy from the consequence of external shocks like an overvalued currency. Five years of yen overvaluation have rendered a generation of high-quality Japanese education powerless.

Nobody argues that growing unemployment and rising income inequality are not caused by low skills; the issue is by how much. The consensus is that educational and training shortfalls explain about 20 per cent of the problem.

Richard Freeman and Larry Katz say in one American study (Working Under Different Rules, Russell Sage, 1994) that between 7 and 25 per cent of rising inequality is due to inadequate skills; while Steve Nickell and Brian Bell (Oxford Review of Economic Policy, Vol 11, No 1) found that in Britain the decline in real demand for unskilled workers contributed up to 20 per cent of the long-run increase in unemployment. So the other 80 per cent of the story needs to be addressed as well.

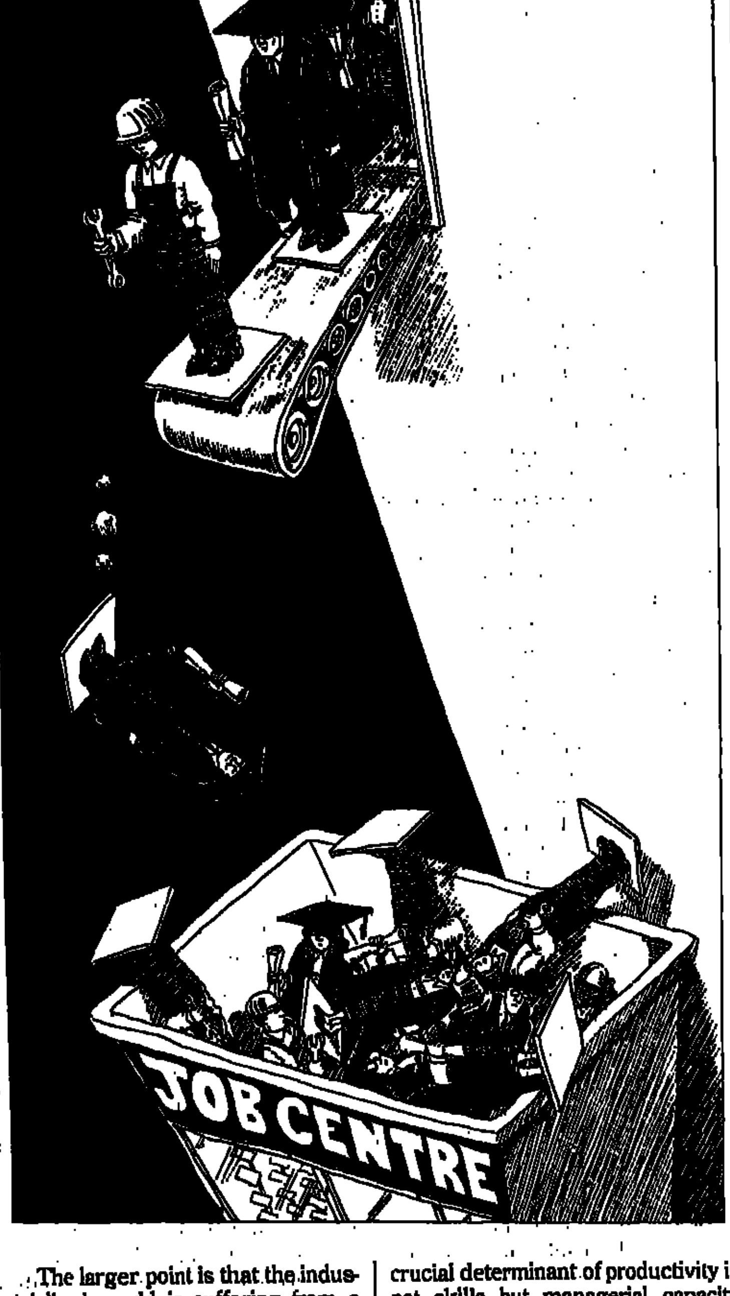
International studies show that job creation schemes have little or no long-run effect — largely because any new jobs tend to displace old ones. And reducing social overheads, which ministers endlessly intone as the sole means to lower unemployment, have little or no impact, either.

This conforms with what elementary economic theory would predict. If employers are relieved of paying social security contributions, in the long run they pay workers that part of the real product wage that used to go in social security contributions as extra wages. In other words, the long-run employment-boosting impact is nil. Employers' national insurance contributions are an excellent way of raising revenue and lowering real wages with no long-run unemployment effects — and government policy has been completely wrong in this area as in so many, shrivelling the tax base for no long-run employment gains.

Training, at least, offers more certain returns — but only marginally. In the above-mentioned Oxford Review, Lars Calmfors and Per Skedinger analyse the impact of Sweden's training programmes, and find that while they do better than job creation schemes in lowering unemployment the results were "very unstable". Sometimes training worked but sometimes it increased unemployment by raising wage expectations above what employers could pay.

The assessment from the US is equally sobering. Professor Barry Bluestone of the University of Massachusetts reports (American Prospect, Winter 1995) that most US training schemes launched since the 1960s have shown dubious returns, and even when they are successful the advantages in higher earnings and employment are small.

As for using education to solve the problem, US estimates on how much potential spending is involved are mind-boggling. James Heckman of the University of Chicago says that to improve the educational attainment of the bottom half of the US population to take income inequality back to 1979 levels would cost $2 trillion!



The larger point is that the industrialised world is suffering from a multitude of shocks to which education and training can only offer a partial response. In the US, Freeman and Katz identify de-industrialisation, de-unionisation, low-cost competition, immigration and the US trade deficit as explaining the other 80 per cent of unemployment and inequality. Prof Bluestone responds by saying that stronger trade unions, redistributive taxation and active trade and industrial policies are part of a balanced policy response along with education and training.

In any case there remain big questions about what skills should be offered in any training programme. In a survey of nine countries Mckinsey Global Institute found that the crucial determinant of productivity is not skills but managerial capacity and strategy. Well-organised, long-termist firms are the keys to economic success; not training in itself.

The good news is that Mr Blair is beginning to recognise this. In his Singapore speech he touched on the question with more conviction than he has since he became leader, talking of building a stakeholder economy where companies with reformed managerial structures could generate more trust, long-termism between managers and workers. The beginnings of a rounded approach are discernible if Labour is to succeed in government — but it will mean a tougher line on the City and corporate governance than New Labour has so far seemed ready for.

In Brief

AT&T, the American telecoms group, will lose 40,000 jobs and $6 billion as it splits into three companies this year.

GRANADA lifted its bitterly fought bid for Forte, the hotel and restaurant company, to $5.9 billion, up $750 million from the television and restaurant group's original bid.

THE UK Government signalled its determination to push ahead with rail privatisation by announcing that shares in Railtrack, the track operator, will be sold worldwide.

AIRBUS Industrie, the British, German, French and Spanish maker of commercial jets, was beaten to a second big East Asia order in three months by Boeing. Malaysia's national airline followed Singapore's in ordering only Boeing jets. Its $4 billion order came as British Airways confirmed it wants to develop super jumbos with Boeing. Last year Airbus saw its orders drop 15 per cent to 106 aircraft.

FRANCE'S youngest newspaper, InfoMatin, closed after losing Fr170 million ($35 million) in two years.

JAPANESE banks look like selling their debt in the cash-strapped Channel tunnel operator, up to 25 per cent of Eurotunnel's $12.27 billion borrowings because of the financial squeeze within their domestic market.

THE chairman of Renault, Louis Schweitzer, was placed under investigation in connection with a phone-tapping scandal.

GENERAL Motors said it could take away work from Britain after Vauxhall workers rejected a three-year pay deal.

THE jury in the Maxwell fraud trial was considering its verdict on Tuesday. Two sons of the late tycoon are accused of defrauding company pension funds.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates December 11	Sterling rates January 8
Australia	2.0808-2.0851	2.0752-2.0794
Austria	15.57-15.59	15.69-15.71
Belgium	45.50-45.60	45.85-45.95
Canada	2.1154-2.1184	2.1078-2.1108
Denmark	8.57-8.59	8.62-8.64
France	7.64-7.65	7.64-7.66
Germany	2.2142-2.2172	2.2316-2.2347
Hong Kong	11.86-11.87	11.98-11.99
Ireland	0.9668-0.9694	0.9676-0.9700
Italy	2,446-2,449	2,442-2,446
Japan	154.89-155.15	163.31-163.56
Netherlands	2.4779-2.4812	2.4992-2.5024
New Zealand	2.3708-2.3749	2.3497-2.3536
Norway	9.77-9.79	9.83-9.85
Portugal	232.50-233.13	231.50-232.13
Spain	188.60-188.88	187.62-187.90
Sweden	10.34-10.36	10.26-10.28
Switzerland	1.7921-1.7949	1.8025-1.8053
USA	1.5336-1.5346	1.5502-1.5512
ECU	1.2045-1.2058	1.2046-1.2059

FTSE100 Share index up 88.5 at 3720.6. FTSE 250 index up 143.2 at 4080.1. Gold up $6.50 at $396.50.

Sacking threatens Stock Exchange's future

Lisa Buckingham

LONDON'S future as a world financial centre was threatened last week after the Stock Exchange sacked its chief executive, Michael Lawrence.

The announcement stunned the City, even though major stockbrokers had been mounting a fierce rearguard action against innovations Mr Lawrence was trying to introduce. They had accused him of trying to move too quickly and ignoring their concerns.

Modernisation of the Stock Exchange is seen as crucial if London is to maintain its international role and draw business from big finance houses around the world. Mr Lawrence had been pursuing a strategy of altering the way in which shares are transacted in London, bringing practice more into line with other financial markets. But the City's big battalions have spent hundreds of millions of pounds in recent years developing computer systems and training staff to work in the London stock market's specialised way.

The latest debacle comes at a time when the City's main institutions are under increasing pressure. Lloyd's of London, one of three pillars of the Square Mile, is currently in a battle for its survival. The second pillar, the Stock Exchange, now faces turmoil with its leadership in Europe potentially threatened. Only the third pillar, the Bank of England, stands reasonably secure, and it felt it necessary to move in an executive director of the Bank as a second deputy chairman to the Exchange.

Recent changes to rules governing share trading across Europe have given a boost to rivals of the London exchange. There is deep concern that if London lacks a coherent strategy, supported by its major users, its position as the world's third-largest stock market behind New York and Tokyo will be threatened.

The Stock Exchange chairman, John Kemp-Welch, said a board meeting decided overwhelming that Mr Lawrence should go. He denied that any one incident had triggered the showdown and stressed there was no question of impropriety.

It is understood that some members of the board regarded Mr Lawrence as a "loose cannon" who had failed to defend the market's reputation and had communicated ineptly the changes he wanted to make with its 350 member firms.

Mr Laurence's departure comes less than three years after his predecessor resigned after a paperless share dealing system was aborted.

Mr Lawrence, aged 52, former finance director of insurance company Prudential, stands to collect a golden handshake of about £350,000.



The Washington Post

China Accused of Abusing Orphans

Chinese children are dying from starvation in state orphanages, says a human rights monitoring group. **Steven Mufson** reports from Beijing

THOUSANDS of Chinese children are dying from medical neglect and starvation in state-run orphanages, according to a report by Human Rights Watch/Asia, a U.S.-based monitoring group.

The 331-page report charges that a majority of children admitted to a Shanghai orphanage in the late 1980s and early 1990s died within a year and that the high death rate is typical of China's orphanages. The report alleges that Shanghai orphanage officials carried out a policy known as "summary resolution" that singled out children for death by starvation to keep the orphanage population stable. To cover up those cases, orphanage staff falsified medical records to blame the deaths on "congenital malformation of the brain," the report says.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch describes itself as an independent watchdog group that was established in 1978 to monitor and promote human rights around the world. It is supported by private contributions and accepts no government funds. It is one of the leading human rights monitors in China and has been a vigorous critic of Chinese government policy.

The report relies heavily on material from Zhang Shuyun, a 53-year-old graduate of Beijing University of Medical Science who worked in the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute from 1988 to 1993. Zhang left China last year with a large number of orphanage documents, medical records and internal government reports about conditions there. Ai Ming, a disabled orphan who grew up in the Shanghai orphanage and who left China last year, provided supporting testimony and ghastly photographs he took of dying children in 1992.

The Chinese State Council's information department responded angrily to the report, calling it "an attempt to influence public opinion and swindle the masses" motivated by "hostility towards the Chinese people." The State Council office said that even though many of the children are seriously ill when they arrive at the orphanage, the mortality rate at the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute was down to "around 4 percent." The Chinese government invited foreign journalists to visit the Shanghai facility at the weekend.

In an interview, Wang Jianqun, director of the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute, called the report "completely false." Han Weicheng, who ran the Shanghai orphanage when Zhang worked there and who Zhang accused in the report of sexually abusing children and ordering the falsification of medical records, said in a separate interview that Zhang's accusations were "slanders" and "insults."

The Human Rights Watch/Asia report is the fourth major account of abuse and death of children at Chinese orphanages. In 1993, the South China Morning Post published photos and an account of "dying rooms" at an orphanage in Nanning in Guangxi Province. Staff members told the Hong Kong newspaper that 90 percent of the baby girls who arrived at the orphanage died there.

Last year, a British documentary television crew obtained footage of orphanages they did not identify by posing as American charity fundraisers. The crew broadcast pictures of infants suffering extreme malnutrition and of children tied down in chairs, soaked in their own urine.

An article last fall in the German magazine Der Spiegel based on an eyewitness account described similar conditions in a Harbin orphanage that the magazine called part of "the children's gulag."

In each case, the Chinese government denounced the reports.

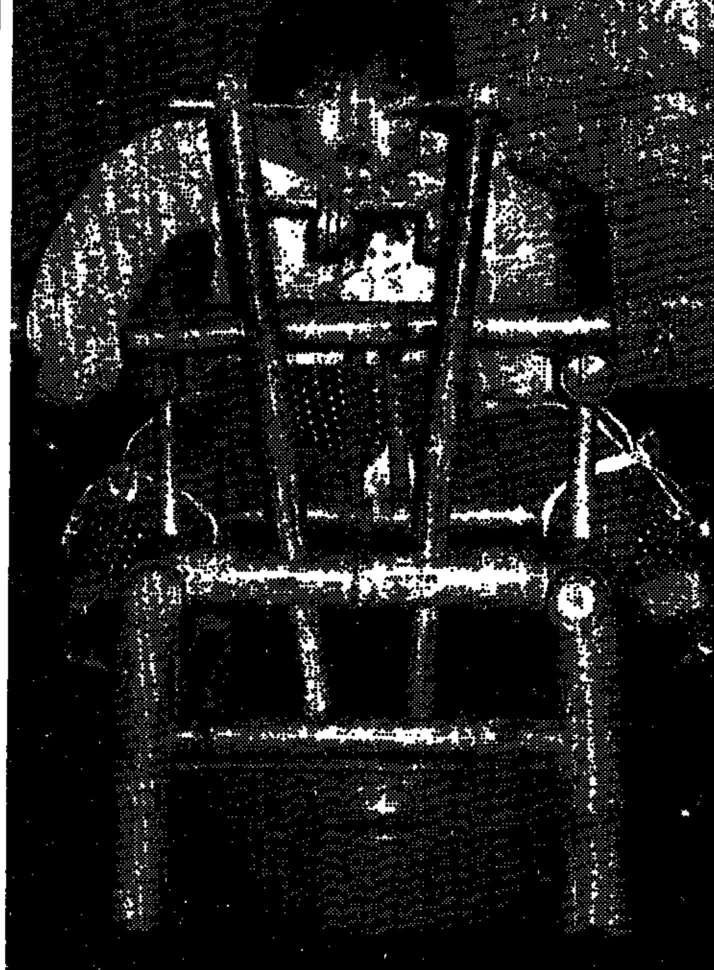
The Human Rights Watch report gives an unusual amount of detail and quotes Chinese insiders on the record criticizing government practices. It also describes the struggle by those insiders to change conditions. Lawyers and officials from the Civil Affairs Ministry, the city government and the Shanghai General Labor Union all investigated. Human Rights Watch reprints a report by lawyers for the Labor Union that said the welfare institute "has serious problems. Disabled children are being abused and the number of children dying has increased each year."

In the end, their efforts had little effect. The director, Han, has been promoted. Zhang was criticized by her superiors. The report also alleges that the then-mayor of Shanghai, Wu Bangguo, took part in an effort to cover up conditions at the orphanage. Wu has since been promoted to one of China's vice premierships.

Zhang, who has been supporting herself in the United States by giving Chinese lessons, said in an interview last week from England that when she arrived at the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute she noticed that the children there were "sacks of bones" and often tied to their beds. She said she saw several starve to death.

The report adds that Zhang performed medical checkups on the children only once a month. She cited as an example the case of a 1-year-old girl named Sun Zhu. Zhang examined Sun on June 7, 1989, one day after the child was admitted. Zhang said that Sun appeared dehydrated, perhaps from a bout of diarrhea, but otherwise in reasonable condition. A month later, the baby was emaciated. On the third exam on August 12, the baby was so hungry that she tried to chew Zhang's hand. She died later that day. The cause of death entered in the medical record was "congenital malformation of brain."

The report cites medical records Zhang took as showing that 153 children died at the orphanage in a 13-month period beginning December 1988, shortly after her arrival. Most were less than 2 months old at the time of admission. During a second period, from November 1991 through October 1992, the report says that 207 children died. Over 80 percent died within a year of admission, the report says.



Helpless . . . Footage captured by a British TV crew last year included shots of children tied in chairs

The State Council denied the report's charges. It did not give figures for that period, but it said that the Shanghai orphanage had 402 residents in 1994 and released 183 for adoption, family reunion, employment in the community or transfer to other institutions. The government said that in 1995, there were 512 residents and 166 were released, including 139 who were adopted.

Countering an image of medical neglect, the government said that 87 children were operated on for congenital heart defects, clubfoot and other diseases.

FORMER orphanage director Han said: "There are some problems that aren't curable. You should understand that I'm innocent, and some deaths I'm not responsible for."

But the Human Rights Watch report says that many deaths were attributed to diseases or conditions that should be easily treatable. In the 1988-89 period, the leading cause of death was cited as "congenital maldevelopment of brain." In the 1991-92 period, it was "malnutrition." Other causes of death cited included "mental deficiency" and cerebral palsy.

Zhang said that the orphanage staff frequently gave children sleeping pills, especially when the children were suffering from hunger. She said that one child overdosed on the pills.

Children who complained about abuses or were accused of misbehavior were falsely diagnosed as "mentally ill" and transferred to psychiatric hospitals.

Foreigners and Chinese people who have visited Chinese orphanages have said that certain wards are closed off, allegedly because the children in those wards are sick. Many suspect those rooms are closed to conceal evidence of abusive treatment.

Some Chinese officials who have visited orphanages acknowledge that conditions are often inadequate. Funding and staff training are often insufficient, especially in rural areas, some officials say. But they add that orphans compete for resources in a country where about 80 million people live in abject poverty and where child mortality rates run as high as 70 out of 1,000 in some rural areas.

Moreover, the children given up by Chinese parents are usually sick or disabled. Because of China's efforts to impose a one-child policy, few parents are willing to part with healthy children. Foreign experts estimate that 80 percent of Chinese orphanage residents are disabled in some way. Most of the healthy children in the orphanages tend to be girls, who are not valued as much as males in China's tradition.

Only a small fraction of China's orphans live in the country's roughly 90 orphanages, called children's welfare institutes. Far more live in the approximately 1,100 welfare institutions that also serve the elderly and mentally disabled. Most of those institutions are poorly staffed or ill-equipped to deal with physical and emotional needs of young orphans. Altogether, welfare institutions of all sorts hold about 20,000 of the 100,000 orphans China says it has. The report calls the rest "missing" but international experts say that other orphans stay in informal settings arranged by local officials depending on local resources and inclinations.

NATO Alert To Tension In Balkans

John Pomfret in Sarajevo

NATO forces increased their patrols in the southwestern city of Mostar at the weekend after a Croat policeman was killed by gunfire in the latest in a series of violent incidents between Croats and Muslims.

Local police said the fatal shots were fired from the Muslim-controlled eastern side of the ethnically divided city. The policeman was shot three times in the abdomen and legs and died from his wounds at a hospital, European Union police spokesman Howard Fox told news services.

Meanwhile, near Sanski Most, in northwestern Bosnia, British soldiers with the NATO mission fired 62 rounds from automatic weapons after snipers shot at their bunker 20 times in five minutes. Because the shots came from a bunker on the confrontation line midway between Bosnian Serb and government forces it was not yet possible to tell who was to blame, British spokesman Col. David Shaw said.

The violence came on the same day that another problem for NATO's efforts to enforce the peace pact resurfaced — on the Serb side.

Radovan Karadzic, political leader of the Bosnian Serbs, emerged for the first time in several weeks. Under the peace accord reached in Dayton in November, Karadzic is required to step down from his post because he was indicted on war-crime charges by the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.

In a message to his people on the Orthodox Christmas Eve, Karadzic was defiant and appeared unwilling to bow to the pact's requirement. His continued hold on power poses a problem for the NATO-led operation. If officers from the NATO mission see him or other indicted war criminals, they are obliged to make arrests unless doing so would put them in danger, NATO officials have said.

The Bosnian Serb leader's enduring influence is also embarrassing to the United States, which is deploying 20,000 troops as part of the NATO mission. On November 15, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said it was "inconceivable" that Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb military leader who is also wanted by the war crimes tribunal, would be in positions of authority when a peace deal was reached.

In another illustration of the problems facing the peace plan, Carl Bildt, a former Swedish prime minister who is in charge of implementing the civilian side of the peace deal, said at a news conference that his office has less than half the money it needs to begin work in Bosnia. NATO officers had questioned why Bildt did not arrive in Bosnia and begin work sooner.

On Saturday last week he said he had obtained the money for his operation only three days ago from "a bank in Brussels, and I brought it down here in a bag."

Asked how he was going to raise more money for his operation in the face of such bureaucracy, he joked: "I am going back to Brussels to break into the bank vault again."

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 14 1996

Liberals in Russia Feel Alienated

Lee Hockstader
In St. Petersburg

WHEN Russia elected a parliament heavily weighted toward anti-Western Communists and nationalists in December, progressives across the country threw up their hands and despaired.

Concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg, they had voted overwhelmingly for candidates who stood squarely for continued political and economic reform — and who were soundly defeated. If they had always seen themselves as distinct from the rest of Russia — and a little above it — now it seemed they were living almost on a different continent.

"Secede! That's the slogan of the day," proclaimed Alexander Kan, a jazz critic and journalist here who writes a column for the Moscow Times. "We need to encase ourselves within an artificial border, create a new state out of our city and pursue liberal democratic reforms without worrying about the vast country to the south and east."

It was an extreme view, maybe, but one that accurately caught the post-election mood of the Russian intelligentsia — the Western-leaning, reform-minded elite that over the years has set itself against czars and Communist Party secretaries alike and embodied the conscience of the nation.

The results of the December 17 parliamentary elections showed a Russian electorate sharply divided between haves and have-nots, between the two biggest cities and the rest of the country — and most of all, between the intelligentsia and everyone else.

No part of Russian society had a greater emotional stake in the collapse of Soviet power and the embrace of liberal values than the intelligentsia. When the Communist regime folded in 1991, liberals rejoiced. For a brief moment, the intelligentsia felt something like unity with the coal miners, factory workers and urban office workers who were rallying in the streets for Boris Yeltsin and faster reforms.

The union proved short-lived. In parliamentary elections in 1993, most liberals stuck with Yegor Gaidar, the young economist who lasted less than a year as Yeltsin's first prime minister in 1992. But millions of factory workers and farmers, squeezed by Russia's economic crisis and angry at the upheaval all around them, voted for the ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

Among liberals who had been cheerleaders for the reforms of Yeltsin and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the disillusionment and disgust were intense. There was a strong sense that, having lost its enemy — a powerful, totalitarian government — the intelligentsia had slipped in status and influence. Russian voters were disdained as an uncouth mob.

Amid the growing alarm, the intelligentsia are running out of political options. Gaidar clearly is not a viable candidate for the presidential elections in June.

Economist Grigory Yavlinsky is seen as an acceptable if opportunistic alternative, but his Yabloko party garnered just 7 percent of the parliamentary vote, and he is given little chance in presidential elections.

Clinton Submits 7-Year Budget Plan

Ann Devroy

PRESIDENT CLINTON last weekend bowed to Republican demands for a new seven-year balanced budget proposal and then signed legislation to fully reopen the government without constraints. The action ends, at least until January 26, the longest and most disruptive federal shutdown in the nation's history.

Clinton's proposal is a modification of the Senate Democratic budget plan that White House officials said meets the Republican requirement that his plan be certified by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to eliminate the deficit by 2002.

"This plan will show that you can balance the budget in seven years and protect Medicare, Medicaid, education and the environment, and provide tax relief to working families," Clinton told reporters. "This is a time of great national promise. We need to find unity and common ground."

Republicans called it the "most liberal" of all five of Clinton's budget proposals this year and said it spends at least $400 billion more over seven years than they would. But the CBO did certify it as producing a balanced budget by 2002, removing the final Republican demand, made repeatedly over the past year, for such a proposal.

Even though Clinton has submitted a budget that Republicans say can form the basis for negotiations, there are serious philosophical and monetary differences between the Republican proposal and Clinton's on such issues as Medicaid and Medicare and no assurance that the two sides can agree on a seven-year plan to balance the federal budget.

House Budget Committee Chairman John R. Kasich, R-Ohio, and Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete V. Domenici, R-N.M., at the White House for budget talks, sharply criticized elements of the plan, complaining it does not do enough to revamp Medicare and Medicaid, welfare and other social programs. Clinton and the congressional leaders resumed a discussion of their differences after the new proposal was tabled, and the talks continued late into the night.

Administration officials said the plan would cut taxes over seven years by $87 billion, provide savings of $102 billion from Medicare and $52 billion from Medicaid plus an additional $295 billion from other domestic programs. The discretionary domestic cuts are about 75 percent of those in the Republican proposal.

The submission by Clinton is the next step on a long, tortuous journey toward Republican goals that began when the GOP took control of Congress. The president's first budget in January continued deficit spending into the new century. His second proposal took 10 years to balance the budget and used economic analyses the GOP rejected as too optimistic, allowing him to spend more and still show a balanced budget on paper. Other budget proposals since showed a seven-year balanced budget, and a revised seven-year budget, but all used Office of Management and Budget numbers that the GOP rejected.

White House officials maintained Clinton did not cave in on the policies within the budget, simply on the demand to find a new route there. Said one official, "We always said we could live with their stated goal of balancing the budget, but not with their hidden goal of destroying the government."

But Republicans did get Clinton, again, to do something he said he never would — provide a balanced budget in seven years.

"The good news is that at least we're going to have a document on the table" that Republicans can evaluate, Kasich told reporters.

The announcement on Saturday last week appeared to remove much of the confusion that resulted from the last-minute legislation passed by Congress the day before to end the shutdown that began on December 16 and restore back pay to 760,000 federal workers. The measure, however, only provided funding for about two dozen politically sensitive programs.

But in addition to measures to reopen the government and fund programs piecemeal, Congress also passed legislation before it adjourned that would allow the government to reopen and fully operate until January 26 if Clinton submitted an acceptable balanced budget plan. His subsequent action satisfied that requirement.

The government now goes back to work on a more or less normal footing, although many departments and agencies will operate with lower rates of funding than in 1995.

The new Clinton budget proposal is similar to the original Senate Democratic version, with one major exception. It provides for $87 billion in tax cuts over seven years, where the original version did not.

Parts of the government had begun opening last weekend after Clinton signed legislation to partially open the government. The national monuments, including the Statue of Liberty, and museums along the Mall were among the first parts of the government to open. Large national parks, especially those with numerous roads that may need maintenance because of winter weather damage, may take a day or two to resume normal services, the National Park Service said.

Reopening the government "is not just a lights off, lights on proposition," Office of Personnel Management Director James B. King said, because many agencies face formidable backlogs of work.



A Stone's Throw From Paranoia

OPINION

Jim Hoagland

THE YEAR'S first dream came after a day of moviegoing, magazine-reading and a Dagwood sandwich at midnight. In the near future, a stern psychiatrist was asking about the exact moment that I deluded myself into believing Oliver Stone had taken over William F. Buckley's National Review magazine. I began to babble:

Sorry, doctor; I can't remember. But it must have been soon after the Nixon film came out.

It seems obvious now: Stone would not long restrict himself to cinematic revisionism of events and people already cold on the slabs of the mind's morgue: Vietnam, JFK, Nixon. Distorting events already receding into history's advancing shadow was child's play.

No, he would have eventually understood that distorting the present is a greater, more rewarding challenge. (Bear with me, doctor. This is a truth that does not come out of the inkblots of facts.) In part that means persuading the electorate that it is not seeing and hearing what it is seeing and hearing. The current battle over the federal budget deficit is an important example:

GOP 101 in Instant Revisionism requires you to speak only of balancing the budget for future generations even though your real aim is to cut taxes for yourself and your constituents and cripple the federal government's powers now. On the other side of the aisle, Democrats in Demagoguery 101 fight against making wealthy recipients of Medicare pay premiums according to their means and then claim they are only protecting the poor.



That twitch of your eyebrow says I go too far. What else would you expect from one in journalism, a trade that has always arrogated to itself the task of instant history? Here is the core of much of the antagonism and distrust that has developed in Washington between the politicians and the media, who sell competing versions of the same events into the same market almost as they occur.

They became us, and we became them, thanks largely to television.

Yes, I know, telephobia is an obsession with us print people. And yes, I digress. What, you ask insistently, does this have to do with Oliver Stone and National Review, Buckley's lively opinion sheet that is firmly anchored on the right far from Stone's left-wing paranoia?

It was only in January 1996, that I began to see this, doc. There was the movie, in which Stone has his cinematic Nixon acknowledge being a pawn of the hidden system — "the beast" — that runs and corrupts America. And there was National Review, reporting the current president had sold out brave patriots in Eastern Europe in an act of contemporaneous treachery.

The article explained that the Clinton administration had betrayed Eastern European countries wanting to join NATO to get Russia to send 1,000 troops to serve in Bosnia under U.S. command. In a secret accord described to National Review by "official and authoritative sources, both Russian and American," Clinton has promised Moscow that "in return for its cooperation with the United States in Bosnia peacekeeping, NATO enlargement will be put on the back burner for the foreseeable future."

The article said: "It is wrong to sacrifice NATO enlargement to the Russians over Bosnia or over anything else." Who could argue with that but some squishy softs, like those guys around Franklin Roosevelt who gave away Eastern Europe at the first Yalta, before Clinton was born? Who, doc?

Not you, I guess. Certainly not me. But get this: Who do you think wrote the article? Peter Rodman, director of national security programs at the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom. Nixon! And Rodman worked for Henry Kissinger in the Nixon White House. What more evidence of a connection to Oliver Stone do you need, man?

You dismiss the article as just a Clinton-bashing lead-in to the '96 political campaign? Then it is true: Only we paranoids see things anymore. Even before the article was published Rodman's information was aired as a question on national television (ABC) directed at Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Christopher denied it. But he would, wouldn't he? What more proof could you need?

And Rodman and Stone have never met, have never discussed "Clinton," the Bosnia betrayal screenplay. Of course. Of course, doc. But they will in my next movie, or my next National Review article. Truth is too important to be tied down by mere facts.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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No room for sentiment . . . many cities in the vanguard of the get-tough approach to the homeless are among America's most liberal
PHOTOGRAPH: JACKY CHAPMAN

Exiles on Main Street

Increasingly blamed for America's urban ills, the homeless are facing a new initiative to drive them off the streets, reports **Sue Anne Pressley** from Austin, Texas

EVERY night, the residents retire, hundreds of them disappearing into the alleys and abandoned buildings, into tents tucked deep in the woodlands or small encampments scattered along the creeks and rivers.

They are this city's homeless, and their numbers always swell this time of year, when the first snows begin to fall in the north, and Austin's 75-degree afternoons seem particularly inviting to the adventurous or the threadbare.

But here and in more than 40 cities across the nation, the homeless are receiving a grim message this winter as they face a determined push of new proposals and laws aimed at banishing them from the very places they seek out the most. Although proponents describe the measures as a forced response to an increasing and ever bolder homeless population, critics see the movement as proof of something more ominous: the growing hardheartedness of America.

"It is an increasing trend in cities around the country to pass laws that essentially criminalize homelessness," said Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty in Washington, DC. "I think, at best, it reflects frustration on the part of local politicians and, at worst, an effort to blame the urban ills on homeless people."

This is hardly a new problem. On any given night, Foscarinis and other advocates for the homeless said, there are about 700,000 homeless people in the United States, and local officials have long debated how to address their needs while also protecting the interests of merchants and property owners.

What is notable now is the forcefulness with which these communities are attacking the problem — using police officers as their agents — and the timing of their actions.

The crackdown is coming, homeless advocates charge, as budget cuts on every level also are shrinking the substance-abuse and job-training programs meant to help the homeless restore their lives.

Even more striking is that many of the cities in the vanguard of the get-tough approach are among the country's most liberal. Here, the City Council is nearing final approval of a law to ban camping in any public place, a shortsighted step, critics say, in a city generally viewed as the state's bastion of liberal sympathies.

In Boston, police recently began to crack down on the after-dark denizens of Boston Common. In Seattle, city officials have ordered a vigorous enforcement of its sidewalk and trespass laws, making it difficult, critics say, for the homeless even to sit down anymore in the downtown area. In New Orleans, an anti-camping law has just been proposed, designed to control the homeless youths — the self-described "gutter punks" — who swarm the French Quarter.

"The general public is fed up," said New Orleans City Council President Peggy Wilson, author of the proposal. "We have certain standards we must uphold. People should be able to use public spaces. When other people come in and build cardboard tents and so on, the area becomes inaccessible for anyone else. Particularly in Lafayette Square, there's a group that feeds people on weekends, and they make no effort to clean up, they dump the garbage and trash, and there's the presence of enormous rats. We can't give our public spaces over to a certain group."

For the past two years, San Francisco has been leading the way in its firm-handed approach to the problem. More than 27,000 citations for nuisance crimes have been issued to the homeless, though many tickets have been dismissed by the courts with little impact, critics said, except to increase police work and further disrupt the lives of the people arrested.

Mayor Frank Jordan, a former police chief, recently stepped up the efforts with announcements that police officers were clearing people from encampments in Golden Gate Park and rousting them from doorways and alleys in the Haight-Ashbury district and other neighborhoods. But Jordan was sharply criticized for the actions during his recent reelection campaign and it was considered one factor in his defeat. Incoming mayor Willie Brown has been careful to stress that he favors more social service programs for the homeless rather than further police crackdowns.

"Several million dollars have gone down the drain so this mayor's office can give the business community the perception they're addressing the problem, by having fewer homeless people visually present," said Paul Boden of the San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness, who contrasts the city's available shelter beds — about 1,400 — with the estimated homeless population of 15,000. "What happens is, you end up digging your camps deeper and putting them in neighborhoods that are really dangerous."

The District of Columbia's response to providing shelter for the homeless and dealing with panhandlers has changed significantly over the past five years, according to DC Council member Linda Cropp (D), chairman of the council's Human Services Committee. The DC Council responded to complaints by downtown business owners in 1994 by passing the "aggressive panhandling" law, which makes it a crime to harass an individual or aggressively request money.

THE District in recent years has backed away from an earlier commitment to provide shelter for every homeless person in need. "DC is attempting to use its money more wisely [in terms of] the homeless and dealing with root causes," Cropp said. "It's not necessarily that patience is running out. Money is running out, and the need sometimes seems to be growing."

In Austin, the city's estimated 6,000 homeless can be found along Sixth Street, a high-profile center of music clubs and drinking spots; in "the Drag" section near the University of Texas campus; and in simple plastic tents and more elaborate, semi-permanent setups along the greenways and little-traveled sections of the city parks.

Residents there tend to be older, more seriously impaired by years of drinking and drugs, and more cynical about society's attitudes. Many of them classify themselves as the working homeless, picking up construction jobs when they can. But they also argue that with Austin's notoriously tight and expensive housing market, they have little hope of accumulating enough money to rent a place to live.

"We're not bothering anybody," said a 25-year veteran of the streets who gave his name as Henry.

But downtown property owners beg to differ. Saying there is an important distinction between down-on-their-luck families and transient individuals, usually single men, who cause the most problems, the property owners say they have finally lost patience.

"Austin is apparently known as an easy city. It provides a lot for the homeless. Others call it a soft touch," said Jose Martinez, executive director of the Downtown Austin Alliance, which favors the anti-camping bill and cites more than 80 public and private assistance programs Austin offers to the homeless.

"What we are talking about in the case of the downtown area is a small, hard-core group of individuals who support themselves through illegal, immoral activity — stealing, purse-snatching. In Austin, you see these people at the corners panhandling, the same people day in and day out. They chose this lifestyle."

The City Council's new anti-camping ordinance is expected to carry fines as high as $500 and, critics say, eventually would lead to something akin to a debtors' prison. At the same time, the council's homeless task force, a group of 34 business and community leaders, is proposing a $3.5 million "campus" for the homeless that would follow the example set in Orlando. There, the Homeless Coalition has used private and public funds to construct a covered pavilion that can sleep up to 500 people and provide laundry facilities and health services.

So far, however, Austin officials seem lukewarm about the idea, citing costs and problems in finding a local neighborhood that would allow such a gathering in its midst.

Said task force member Tom Hatch, an architect: "It's insane to make not having a home a crime . . . I think people don't know what to do. They're frustrated, and they don't want to spend money on the homeless. We've turned into more of a big city, we've turned a little more callous. You see it so much, the homeless, you get numb to it. Your passion wanes."

Lars Eighner is well-acquainted with that attitude. For 4 ½ years, he and his dog lived on the streets, with Eighner eventually turning the experience into an acclaimed book, Travels With Lizbeth. He thinks the current climate toward the homeless is especially mean-spirited, but he doesn't think much will change.

"It's really not too surprising that people try to maintain this upper-middle-class illusion that everything is wonderful, and seeing people in the parks breaks down that illusion," he said. "The feeling I have is it will be more of the same. The police are not going to put all these people in jail and people know that.

"It won't affect the masses. It will mean probably that the shantytowns will be bulldozed more regularly. But it's not going to get rid of the homeless. It's not going to run them out of town."

Staff writer Lonnae O'Neal Parker contributed to this report.

A War Waged Against the Dispossessed

OPINION

Ellen Goodman

THEY'VE disappeared again. The deserving poor who made their cameo appearance over the holiday season vanished as soon the Christmas tree was put out with the trash.

For a few weeks, their real life stories appeared in holiday appeals for charity, for food and toys. Mothers who lost their jobs or their health or their husbands. Children who went without and whose lives went downhill.

But after the holiday hiatus things are back to what passes for normal these days. In Washington and in the public debate, the deserving poor are once again the pathological poor. Poverty is not an economic issue but a moral one.

The loudest voices in the budget battle, the largest number of votes in Congress, echo the sentiments of Ralph Reed, the head of the Christian Coalition, who talks about welfare as the way we "subsidize the very pathological behaviors that we know consign people to hopeless and generational poverty."

Writing in the midst of budget wrangling between the White House and Congress, I don't know precisely how deep the cuts will be to programs for the poor. But there is little doubt that we are — eyes open — consigning more children to deeper poverty in the name of saving children from debt.

We are embarked on this radical course, barely blushing, because the conservatives have won the image war. Like victors who get to write history, they have at least temporarily won the battle over portraying the poor. And the poverty programs.

On one level, the welfare reform bill that passed Congress would "merely" transfer responsibility and funds from the federal government to the states in block grants, cutting $58 billion in the process. But on the human level, it would reform welfare by ending it as a federal entitlement for poor mothers and children.

We are encouraged to appease our social conscience by focusing on the worst images of the poor and by repeating as a mantra the glib promise: less will be more.

Way back in the '60s and '70s, liberals too had grandiose ideas about our country's ability to win the war against poverty. They were not modest enough in appraising the ability of public policy to change human behavior.

But now it's conservatives who are immodest beyond the point of recklessness. Immodest in the certainty that public un-policy can change behavior and economic reality for millions. Immodest about the relationship between policy and morality.

We are headed toward massive changes and we don't know the consequences. We don't know how many more parents will find jobs and how many more families will be homeless. We don't know how many fewer children will be born and how many more will be hungry.

But we can be sure of one thing: For those who live in poverty, less is not going to be more. It will be even less.

The Accidental President

Douglas Brinkley

MAN OF THE PEOPLE:
A Life of Harry S. Truman
By Alonzo L. Hamby
Oxford University Press. 760pp. $35

THE STORY OF Harry Truman is the stuff of legend. The straight-talking Missouri politician became one of America's greatest presidents through an appealing combination of old-fashioned common sense, Midwestern grit, and hard-earned accomplishment. "Give 'em Hell Harry," like his heroes "Honest Abe" and "Old Hickory," has become enshrined in America's folk kingdom, where George Washington tosses silver dollars across the Potomac River and John Kennedy reigns supreme in Camelot: man and myth forever blurred. Although Truman left office in low public esteem, his standing has risen steadily over the years; during the 1992 election George Bush, Bill Clinton and Ross Perot evoked his name in mantra-like fashion.

Just when it seems that Truman has been forever sanctified, along comes Alonzo L. Hamby's unanticipated Man Of The People: A Life of Harry S. Truman. Hamby, a professor of history at Ohio University, presents a beautifully constructed and scrupulously researched portrait of Truman that strips away the mythologizer's varnish to give us the authentic, gutsy politician whose life was a potent testimony to burning ambition, good judgment and blind luck.

Truman was born on a modest farm outside Lamar, Missouri, in 1884. Although beset by diphtheria and poor eyesight as a boy, he overcame his own deficiencies in part by absorbing the biographies of courageous others.

While a Groton degree and Hudson Valley ancestry afforded FDR entree to Harvard, Independence High School and a dearth of money led Truman to a series of dead-end jobs, including bookkeeper, farmer and haberdasher. In France, during World War I, he earned his first favorable recognition for exemplary service as an artillery officer.

Hamby enters new territory when writing about Truman's early political career. Backed by the corrupt Kansas City political boss Tom Pendergast, Truman was elected Jackson County Eastern District Judge, where he supervised an array of public works programs. An honest, tightrope-walking politician who carefully avoided public or private scandal, Truman justified his relationship with cheats like Pendergast on the largely erroneous belief that they were "fundamentally more decent than the do-gooders who attacked them." By toeing the Pendergast line and demonstrating a boundless capacity for loyalty, Truman was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1934.


ILLUSTRATION: TERRY E. SMITH

Truman was never, in the thoroughbred sense, a New Dealer. He was a pragmatic neopopulist with a conservative bent, who consistently promoted the puritanical virtues of the Babbitt belt. This attitude won him many admirers during the Second World War, when he headed a special Senate watchdog committee assigned to uncover inefficiency and corruption in the nation's defense program. While the "little people" worried about Washington's "elephantine bureaucracy," Truman reached national notoriety as a slasher of government waste.

Truman had served only 83 days as vice-president when FDR died at Warm Springs, Georgia. "The Senator from Pendergast," at age 60, was suddenly the accidental commander-in-chief, faced with the tremendous burden of winning the war against Germany and Japan. "When they told me yesterday what had happened," he said, "I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me."

None of the above did, of course, fall on Truman, but on the president's direct order, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, ushering in the nuclear age. Hamby concludes that Truman, convinced that invading the Japanese home islands would have brought the American boys back in body bags, did the right thing. Unfortunately, Hamby, who carefully avoids getting mired in the acrimonious historical debate, gives critics of the decision short shrift.

Essentially a Cold War historian, Hamby does an excellent job of tracing the motivations behind Truman's Fair Deal domestic programs and anti-Soviet foreign policies. It's all here: the Truman Doctrine, the Taft-Hartley Act, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, the National Security Act, the 1948 upset victory, the creation of NATO, the Chinese Revolution, Joe McCarthy, NSC-68, the Korean War, Douglas MacArthur's dismissal. This seemingly endless flow of tumultuous moments, crucial historical turning points, has made Truman's presidency a fertile ground for scholars. At the helm of these events is Truman, making tough decisions more carefully in this book than in other biographies, an ordinary fellow less self-assured than we have been led to believe.

Turning Misery to Advantage

Michael Dirda

DJUNA
The Life and Work of Djuna Barnes
By Phillip Herring
Viking. 386pp. $29.95

NIGHTWOOD
The Original Version
And Related Drafts
By Djuna Barnes
Edited by Cheryl J. Plumb
Dalkey Archive. 319pp. $23.95

AS IT HAPPENS, a friend of mine lives in Patchin Place, the little courtyard in Greenwich Village where Djuna Barnes (1892-1982) spent the last 40-some years of her amazing life. Two decades ago, when Barnes was still alive, I used to think of ringing her doorbell and genuflecting or kissing her hand or presenting her with a bottle of Scotch: After all, she was one of the last surviving giants of 20th-century literature, author of the legendary novel Nightwood, and a woman who counted James Joyce among her drinking buddies and T.S. Eliot among her admirers. Make that fervent admirers: Eliot kept her picture above his desk (next to that of Yeats), addressed her as "dearest" in letters, and once declared her the greatest living writer.

Moreover, Eliot was hardly alone in his enthusiasm. Dylan Thomas used to read from Nightwood on his speaking tours of America. Samuel Beckett, whom Barnes scarcely knew, sent her part of the royalties from Waiting For Godot. Even Dag Hammarskjold, secretary general of the United Nations, valued her work so highly that he helped translate her verse-drama, The Antiphon, into Swedish. Barnes thought it her masterpiece. Rumor has it that he was pulling strings to get her the Nobel Prize when his plane was shot down over Africa.

I never saw her, and doubtless she would have growled at me to go away even if she bothered to open the door. For most of her life Barnes was essentially a "cult" author, esteemed by a small coterie that kept Nightwood in print, savored the brocaded prose of her early autobiographical novel Ryder, and guffawed over the Rabelaisian lesbians of Ladies Almanack (its various ribald characters were based on Parisian notables like salon-keeper Natalie Barney, journalist Janet Flanner, and poets Romaine Brooks and Renée Vivien). In recent years, however, feminist scholars have begun to mine Barnes's work — the University of Maryland, which houses her papers, held a major conference a few years back. It is, thus, clearly the right time for both a good new biography and a modestly priced scholarly edition of Barnes's greatest prose work.

Phillip Herring, a Joyce expert by training, provides a straightforward chronological account of this once-neglected writer's family, friends and career. By comparison with the ill-organized, highly anecdotal 1983 life produced by Andrew Field (oft vilified — sometimes justly — for his early biography of Nabokov), Herring's work seems a little pedantic, the product of a sabbatical rather than the spillover from a passion. The phrase "thoroughly sound" comes irresistibly to mind and might normally be enough to sink the book, except for one small fact: If the soaps ever need any new plot lines, Djuna Barnes's life and work will supply plenty of naughty ideas.

For starters, Barnes's father, Wald, lived with wife, mistress and mother, not to mention assorted offspring, in a big, unhappy family. As a believer in the freest sorts of free love, Dad either raped the teenaged Djuna and/or gave her as a present to an elderly neighbor to deflower. Through most of her childhood the future author slept in the same bed with her grandmother and would seem to have engaged in some level of sexual play with the older woman (surprisingly graphic letters exist). At 17 she was even talked into a common-law marriage with a 52-year-old soap peddler. It only lasted a few months.

Not surprisingly, Barnes was happy to escape from her family to New York, where in the years just before and after World War I she became a well-paid, sought-after young journalist (and occasional illustrator, all too obviously in thrall to Aubrey Beardsley). In one stunt piece she described the ordeal of being force-fed through a tube shoved down her throat, a then common method for preserving the life of fasting suffragettes. Soon she was hanging out with the Provincetown Players, where she came to know Eugene O'Neill, John Reed and other bohemian notables. But, eventually, like so many of the artistically ambitious, the would-be novelist hied herself to Paris and the Left Bank, where she got to know . . . everybody, including Pound, Stein, Hemingway and Joyce — or Jim, as she was allowed to call him.

In her youth Barnes was a striking, if somewhat severe auburn-haired beauty, attractive to both men and women. Although most of her affairs were heterosexual, she always called Thelma Wood the central passion of her life. "I'm not a lesbian. I simply loved Thelma." The liaison lasted eight or so years, and when it was over, Barnes memorialized her lost love in a great work of lamentation, Nightwood. In prose of haunting musicality and splendor, she describes the havoc wreaked by Robin Vote, i.e., Wood, on the people who care for her. Here is the book's august and intricately wrought opening sentence:

"Early in 1880, in spite of a well-founded suspicion as to the advisability of perpetuating that race which has the sanction of the Lord and the disapproval of the people, Hedvig Volkbein, a Viennese woman of great strength and military beauty, lying upon a canopied bed, of a rich spectacular crimson, the valance stamped with the bifurcated wings of the House of Hapsburg, the feather coverlet an envelope of satin on which, in massive and tarnished gold threads, stood the Volkbein arms, — gave birth, at the age of forty-five, to an only child, a son, seven days after her physician had predicted that she would be taken."

BARNES doesn't always write with such oracular, slightly humorous gravity; she can also be quite vulgarly funny, as when a character describes another "whipped with impatience, like a man waiting at a toilet door for someone inside who had decided to read the Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire." In fact, most of the novel's grandest rhetorical flights belong to Dr. Matthew O'Connor, a drunken Irish Tiresias and advisor to the disconsolate, at once swishy, witty and pitiful. As O'Connor explains, "just being miserable isn't enough — you've got to know how." When Nora, the Barnes stand-in, complains about her loneliness, the doctor quickly one-ups her: "A broken heart have you! I have falling arches, flying dandruff, a floating kidney, shattered nerves and a broken heart."

Shocking, confusingly structured, lyrical and haunting, Nightwood didn't precisely sell itself to prospective publishers. Indeed, Cheryl Plumb provides an enthralling account of its publishing history in her introduction to the novel's "original version," crediting Barnes's friend Emily Coleman with astute editorial advice and great cleverness in persuading T.S. Eliot to read the manuscript. Eliot, then working as an editor for the British publishers Faber and Faber, insisted on some 13 pages of cuts, which are here restored. In general, his editing "blurred sexual, particularly homosexual, references and a few points that put religion in an unsavory light. Besides presenting Barnes's original vision of her masterpiece, Plumb's edition also provides useful textual and explanatory notes, as well as reproductions of the surviving typescript pages.

Soon after Nightwood appeared in 1936 Barnes's life fell apart: She started to drink heavily, love affairs went sour, money nearly dried up. Back in New York she rented a small apartment on Patchin Place and settled down to years of crankiness, alcohol and writer's block. Perhaps not the normal kind of block, for she composed reams of poetry and worked sporadically on various projects, but it wasn't until 1957 that she was able to finish The Antiphon, a play that virtually no one could understand. Written in a kind of Elizabethan blank verse and reminiscent, by turns, of Waiting For Godot, The Family Reunion, and Long Day's Journey into Night, this sorrowful drama builds on its author's unresolved anger toward her family, her persistent sense of betrayal and sexual exploitation. It ends with a mother crushing the skull of her Barnes-like daughter. Barnes also evokes her father "flanked by warming-pans, bassoons and bastards."

Djuna Barnes died in 1982 one week after her 90th birthday. Even now, I wish that I had had the courage to ring her doorbell at No. 5, Patchin Place. Real creators, no matter how wayward their genius, deserve our thanks and homage.



New Germany ready to flex its muscles

The settlement of the conflict in the Balkans has signalled Bonn's re-emergence as an active player on the world stage, writes **Louis Delattre**

THE scene took place in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995. In a corridor of the Hope Hotel, the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, bumped into Wolfgang Ischinger, a senior official in the German foreign ministry and Bonn's chief negotiator in the Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia. The handshake that ensued was the first for four years between a Serb leader and an official representative of Germany.

Milosevic told Ischinger: "Richard Holbrooke is the most important person in Dayton. But the second most important is you." Who could ever have imagined that Belgrade would one day pay a tribute of that kind to Bonn?

The story shows that five years after reunification Germany has once again become a leading player on the international stage. Never had it participated in world affairs as actively as it did in 1995.

The decision by the German government to send 4,000 troops of the Bundeswehr to join Nato's Implementation Force (I-For) in the former Yugoslavia may not have been the key event in the process of restoring peace in the Balkans. But it was felt by German public opinion to mark an historic turning point.

The psychological importance of that decision has probably been underestimated outside Germany. This was the first time since 1945 that Bonn had chosen to participate fully in a military intervention beyond Nato frontiers — even though the mission of the German troops, who are based in Croatia and not Bosnia, is mainly of a logistical nature

As a result of that decision, as well as of the political consensus that led up to it, the Germans at last feel in a position to fulfil the responsibilities incumbent upon them in the new world context. Only a few weeks ago, it would have been unthinkable for Germany to agree to send troops to a region like the former Yugoslavia, where the crimes of the Wehrmacht are still fresh in people's minds. That policy of non-intervention, long advocated by Chancellor Helmut Kohl himself, was scrapped for good in 1995.

As Josef Joffe of the Süddeutsche Zeitung puts it: "Bonn is no longer Berne." In other words, the chequebook diplomacy that allowed Germany to take part, from a distance, in the Gulf war can no longer serve as a substitute for foreign policy on the part of a sovereign Germany.

Even though a majority of Germans continue to cite Switzerland or Sweden as the country of their dreams, the nation's governing élite has put Germany on a different course, which is more consistent with the actual importance of the world's third-largest economic power.

The year 1995, then, will be seen as a watershed. The 50th anniversary of the end of the second world war coincided with a mounting sense among Germans of a "return to normality". In countries where memories of the Nazi past are still painfully vivid, such as Israel, the Netherlands and Poland, Kohl was welcomed as a special ally in 1995 and hailed as "the strong man of Europe". At Jerusalem's Hebrew University, a chair of European studies was even named after him following his visit to Israel last June.

"Normality means knowing your own history and facing up to it," says parliamentary deputy Karl Lamers, of the Christian Democratic Union. Germany plainly feels moved to cast a more dispassionate eye on its past. In the view of one leading government figure, "We're getting closer to the day when Germany will he able to talk about Hitler the way the French talk about Napoleon." That shift in public opinion has naturally given the government greater room for manoeuvre in deciding on its foreign policy.

A new and more political dimension has been added to the traditional ingredients of German economic power, as symbolised by the Deutschmark. Germany now accepts the consequences of its new-found power and the responsibilities inherent in it.

It is true that a certain degree of restraint remains one of the major planks of German foreign policy. No German leader, for example, would dream of declaring that he hoped his country would "show the way" to the rest of the world, as Jacques Chirac did on May 7, 1995, in his first speech as French president.

But German leaders are showing increasingly frequent signs of suffering from what a French diplomat has described. as "power flushes". It is hard to tell whether they display such symptoms because they are politically naïve or because they are simply too big for their boots. When, at the end of October, Kohl declined an invitation to attend the United Nations' 50th anniversary celebrations, even though the leaders of 150 other countries throughout the world were due to make the journey to New York, one could not help thinking that Germany was now determined to be treated with especial consideration. That impression was reinforced when Kohl explained that he did not feel he could content himself with "speaking for five minutes" after such a long journey.

It is tempting to suppose that Germany has "great power" pretensions. But things are not as simple as that. It is true that Bonn calls the tune when it comes to defining the terms of the transition to the third stage of European economic and monetary union, and that German leaders tend increasingly often to lecture their partners, including the United States, on the need for budgetary discipline.

It is equally true that the Germans now stick up for their own interests more staunchly than they used to in the past, notably when it is a case of tipping the balance of EU financial aid in favour of central and eastern Europe. But the word *Führungsnation* (leading nation) remains taboo in Germany. It is never used except in rightwing intellectual circles. "We don't want to become a bigger fish than the rest," says a highly placed foreign ministry official (note the use of an aquatic metaphor redolent of harmony and silence, not power and confrontation).

There can be no doubt that Germans were flattered to be offered "partnership in leadership" by President Bush in May 1989, and again by President Clinton in July 1994. But they discovered in 1995 that their special relationship with the US did not rule out fundamental, if minor, differences of approach and even, on occasion, latent tensions.

There were several strong indications in 1995, above all with the Dayton conference, that the US was sometimes more concerned to protect its own interests than those of Europe. As a result, the German leadership is convinced that a strengthening of European integration is now more urgent than ever, as was demonstrated by its decision to opt for a European military observation satellite in close collaboration with France.

German public opinion is not yet ready to accept the idea of German hegemony. What is more, Germany's past, combined with the likelihood that its population will dwindle, prevents it from playing a role like that of the US anywhere in the world. This is supported by the fact that in central and eastern Europe English is more popular as a language than German.

Germany, which likes to define itself as a "post-national power", prefers to leave others to push through proposals that are close to its heart. As Lamers said recently: "We must lead the way without the others noticing." There could be no neater way of expressing the notion that what is good for Germany is good for Europe.

To be sure, 1995 was also marked by serious doubts in Germany about the future of European integration. But in the last account Kohl succeeded in achieving through peaceful means what others before him, and as far as back as Bismarck, had tried to impose by military conquest: a zone of peace and prosperity all round Germany's borders.

(December 31/January 1)

Algeria pins hopes on pluralist government

Can new premier Ahmed Ouyahia provide the break with the past promised by President Zeroual, asks **Ali Habib**

ON DECEMBER 31 Ahmed Ouyahia, a 43-year-old career diplomat, succeeded Mokdad Sifi as Algerian prime minister. President Liamine Zeroual had promised during the runup to November's presidential election, which returned him to office with a comfortable majority, to complete the "break" with what he called "the old system".

In choosing a fairly young man, who is little known to the public and belongs neither to the military élite nor to the political community that has supplied Algeria with most of its ruling cadres since it became independent in 1962, Zeroual has kept his promise to the electorate.

But as he is a cautious man he has preferred to give the job of premier to his top political adviser, in other words to someone he knows well and can trust.

Ouyahia is believed to have played an active part in the various stages of the abortive talks with opposition leaders during 1994, and above all in the semi-secret negotiations the president conducted with the jailed leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj — again without success.

Because he was so closely involved in Zeroual's attempts to establish a dialogue with the legal opposition and the Islamic fundamentalists, Ouyahia is believed now to be thoroughly familiar with Algeria's arcane corridors of power, at a time when the country is going through a crucial period in its history.

Observers believe he has a more political profile than his predecessor Sifi, a discreet technocrat who had been premier since April 1994.

Ouyahia takes up his post in a difficult political and economic environment: general and local elections are due to be held, probably within the next six months, and the economic reforms initiated by Sifi and aimed at bringing about a gradual transition to a market economy will need to be pursued.

On January 5, less than a week after his appointment, Ouyahia formed a 31-member government, which includes one woman. It also comprises three moderate Islamists and a member of the small legal opposition party, the Party of Algerian Renewal.

But Ouyahia's team consists mostly of people who were ministers in the previous government. The key portfolio of foreign minister has gone to Ahmed Attaf, a 42-year-old diplomat who was a junior minister in Sifi's team.

President Zeroual himself, following a well-established tradition in Algeria, retains the post of defence minister and thus remains in control of the security forces and army appointments.

A new element is the creation of the post of junior minister for the expatriate community. Almost 1.5 million Algerians live abroad, about 900,000 of them in France.

The composition of the new team has come as a disappointment to those who had pinned their hopes on the promised break with the old system. As one local journalist put it, "the mountain has given birth to a mouse". But the fact remains that Ouyahia's cabinet is the first pluralist government Algeria has known since independence.

A noted absence is any representative of the Movement for Culture and Democracy, a violently anti-Islamist Berber party headed by Said Sadi, who polled almost 10 per cent of the vote at November's presidential election.

Despite its pluralist touch, the new administration will probably have little say in actual policy-making. Its job will be to apply decisions taken in the upper reaches of the regime.

It is impossible to tell whether Zeroual, since obtaining electoral legitimacy in November, is now able to call the tune, or whether the real power lies, as it always has up to now, in the hands of the so-called "college of generals".

Meanwhile, an end to the violence remains the main concern of ordinary Algerians, who also have to face up to an increasingly difficult economic situation — a series of price rises, including those of electricity, gas, bread, milk and petrol, has just been introduced.

(January 2 and 7/8)

Guatemalan army prepares for change

Bertrand de la Grange
in Guatemala City

"THE Guatemala military has become the driving force of the democratic transition in Guatemala, but it is becoming concerned by the scale of the changes it has encouraged."

This surprising judgment on an army that has been reviled all over the world for the past 30 years for its systematic human rights abuses came from a member of the United Nations team of foreign diplomats monitoring the dialogue between Guatemala's guerrilla movement and the government. As a shrewd judge of Central American politics, he is convinced the military is now prepared to begin handing back the reins of power to the government.

He warned, however: "Some sections of the army and those holding economic power in the country are panicking at the thought of the guerrillas, the Church and politicians insisting, as they have already begun to do, on trying officers who were said to be involved in the massacre of indigenous communities and the murders of prominent opposition members. They don't want to hear that some of them risk prison. They consider that they saved the country by winning the war against subversion and therefore owe no one any explanation."

This is naturally not the view of human rights organisations which after years of struggling in obscurity have at last secured a foothold in the political process by winning several legislative assembly seats at the November 12 general election. They ran in the election under the banner of the New Guatemala Democratic Front (FDNG), a coalition of labour unions and associations, linked to the Guatemala National Revolutionary Union (URNG).

The outgoing president, Ramiro de León Carpio, himself a former prosecutor of human rights violations, says the left's unexpectedly strong showing in the election should help "to speed up peace negotiations and facilitate the reintegration of guerrillas in society".

He pointed out: "Leftwing activism is no longer a sin or a crime."

The elections have been a twofold setback for Guatemalan society's most reactionary elements. They confirmed not only that the military's influence had disappeared with the stinging defeat suffered by the four army generals who ran for the presidency, but also that the new situation enables the country's anti-militarist left to express its views openly. It is the first time that it has been able to do so since 1954 when a coup, backed by the United States, aborted Colonel Jacobo Arbenz's socialist government.

Last October, the enthusiastic rallies that welcomed the return of the remains of former president Arbenz from neighbouring El Salvador, where he died in 1971, helped to give an idea of the extent of the changes that have taken place.

Overwhelmed by angry crowds shouting slogans hostile to the army, the soldiers escorting the coffin were forced to abandon it in the middle of the street. Guatemala's defence minister had instructed the troops that for the sake of national reconciliation they should not respond to provocation.

It was deemed necessary in order to avoid a repetition of the serious incident that had taken place two weeks before causing the deaths of 11 indigenous peasants from a community of repatriated nationals near the village of Chisec. It was the first such massacre since 1990 and sent shock waves through the country, forcing President Ramiro de León to order the arrest of the 26 soldiers involved in the killings and sack his defence minister, General Mario Enriquez Morales.

His successor, General Gonzalez, who belongs to the transitional generation which grew up in the climate of the so-called war on subversion, has helped the movement towards democratic change.

"The Chisec events came as a severe shock to us," he said. "We were absolutely sure such a thing wouldn't happen again. It unfortunately shows that after 35 years of fighting, time is needed to change people's attitudes.

"What our officers need even more than military training is to learn to function in a democratic society. The assistance some countries are giving, such as Great Britain which is offering grants to our officers, and the presence of the UN mission monitoring human rights violations in Guatemala will help us move faster in the right direction."

Argentina's Leonardo Franco, who co-ordinates the 400-strong UN team's activities, says that "impunity is deeply ingrained in this society at every level, especially where the military is involved."

"We are not seeing very many results," he added, "but President Ramiro de León has made some bold decisions such as doing away with compulsory military service, disbanding the army's auxiliary services and replacing the police chief."

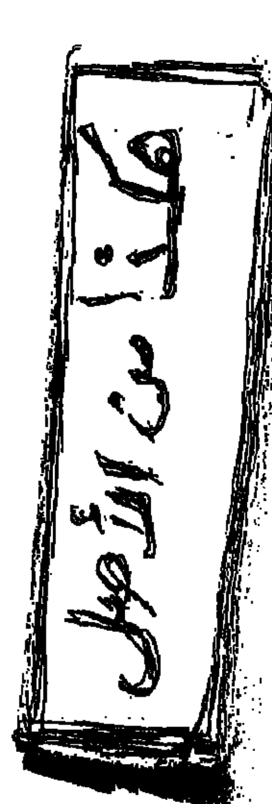
Some of the president's aides hope that he will be able to speed up the pace of reform before he steps down. It is a sentiment shared by a few of the younger officers who want the soldiers implicated in human rights abuses to be pensioned off.

"More than 250 officers were dismissed in El Salvador after the peace agreement was signed," a young colonel pointed out. "In Guatemala we have to get rid of 500 officers, including those who control cocaine exports to the United States, the illegal trade in valuable timber and car thefts throughout the continent."

"We can't go too fast," counters the president. "As in Israel, we too have our extremists, often civilians, who are trying to stir up the army. They are capable of resorting to armed attacks and kidnappings in order to create a climate of disorder and hold back the signing of a peace agreement."

In an attempt to discourage such reactionary elements, the former human rights prosecutor has converted his general staff, which used to be his predecessor's personal guard, into a school for training officers determined to wrest Guatemala from international isolation and replace their generals at the head of the army.

(December 31/January 1)





Flashpoint . . . Violent clashes followed the accidental police shooting last November of seven-year-old Vania Thermidor in Cité-Soleil, where tension remains high
PHOTOGRAPH: PATRICE COUGE

Fear on the rise in Haiti's slums

Democracy may have returned, but it has made little difference to the poor in Cité-Soleil, reports **Jean-Michel Caroit** from Port-au-Prince

ENTERING the huge sprawling shanty town known as Cité-Soleil ("Sun City") on the outskirts of the Haitian capital is difficult even by Jeep. Stinking puddles pot-hole the muddy road. Children with running noses and swollen bellies play on refuse dumps and beg with the help of a few English words whenever a stranger comes along. Meanwhile their mothers cook meagre meals on makeshift braziers.

Today, more than a year after democracy has been restored to Haiti, the poverty is still appalling in Cité-Soleil, yet it has remained one of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's most loyal strongholds. Wedged between Route Nationale 1 and Port-au-Prince Bay, Cité-Soleil is home to more than 200,000 residents living in more or less deprived neighbourhoods bearing such evocative names as Cité-Carton ("Cardboard City") and Boston.

For some weeks now, Cité-Soleil has been causing alarm. On November 23, seven-year-old Vania Thermidor was accidentally killed by a policeman. Violent clashes, punctuated by exchanges of gunfire for hours on end, broke out between the police and armed civilians. The local police station was ransacked and burned to the ground.

Since then, newspapers and radio stations have been spreading stories about a mysterious "red army" whose members, allegedly equipped with combat weapons, are said to be hiding out in the shanty town. There is talk that they are urban guerrilla fighters or dangerous crack-dealers expelled from the United States.

Africa, touted to be the "red army" leader, agreed to talk to me "to set the record straight". An aide led me through a maze of corridors to a solidly built, bearded man of 31, whose dreadlocks were half hidden in a rastafarian turban.

"This whole story of a 'red army' has been made up to discredit us," Africa protested. Introducing himself as the "leader of the Union of the People of Cité-Soleil" which supported Lavalas (President Aristide's movement), Africa denied having combat weapons.

He said that there have always been armed groups. "They're not young men from Cité-Soleil, but former members of the Fraph [Revolutionary Front for Haiti's Advancement and Progress, the neo-Duvalierist para-military group set up during the 1991 coup d'état] at the service of Réginald Boulos and the Mevs family."

The poverty is still appalling in Cité-Soleil but it remains one of Aristide's strongholds

Mr Boulos is in charge of the Health and Development Centre (CDS), a non-governmental organisation that has obtained substantial credits from the United States for social projects in the shanty town. The Mevs are one of Haiti's wealthiest families, owning property and a port just outside Cité-Soleil.

Graffiti with such slogans as "Down with Boulos" testify to the unpopularity of the head of the CDS in the shanty town. For some time now, he has been in Miami on an "extended visit".

Africa, who formed his own rastafarian group some years ago, sees him as his main enemy. "Boulos has offered $600 for my head. But I'm not afraid, for the people protect me."

Azaka, a young singer, confirmed what Africa said. "The red army story has been made up to discredit the struggle of the young people who are only asking for their right to a decent life. Boulos does nothing for us, and you wonder what happens to the money he gets," said Azaka.

He, too, claimed to be a Lavalas supporter. A photograph of Aristide was stuck on a grimy wall next to a poster of Appointment With Death, the film based on the Agatha Christie novel. "Clinton spoke of disarmament and labour-intensive work projects," said the young singer.

"But Fraph members still carry their weapons and we are still without work. What's more, many of our young men now think only of getting away."

The police station in the shanty town is operating again. The young policemen there are convinced the "red army" exists. Despite the presence of French and Canadian police instructors and soldiers from the UN Mission in Haiti, they hesitate to venture into some parts of Cité-Soleil.

"They have assault rifles, Uzis and grenades," warned a young policeman, his eyes hidden behind dark sunglasses. And another added: "Even the children here are armed. GIs have been robbed of their weapons."

It was midday, and traffic had backed up for some distance along Route Nationale 1. Suddenly a group of children, aged between eight and 12, swooped on a white UN pick-up truck and pulled off the tailboard. By the time the two rifle-carrying Bangladeshi soldiers struggled out of the cabin, the boys had made off with several cases stolen from the vehicle.

The products of poverty and a symbol of the growing crime, these street children, nicknamed "cocorats", are a headache for the UN authorities. Visitors to the UN Mission headquarters are advised to take alternative routes to get there.

(January 3)

Private passions on a broad public canvas

Philippe Dagen at a Paris exhibition of more than 1,000 privately owned works of art, which reveal a French taste for surrealism

AT ART openings these days, there is always someone who claims that the reason art dealers and artists are so despondent, and the art market so depressed, is that the French art collector is an extinct species. Someone else — usually a dealer, curator or critic — will chip in and say with a sigh: "Ah, it's so different in Germany/the United States!"

At which point those present will come up with anecdotes about collectors they know in Cologne or New York, who have works by this or that eminent artist on the walls of every room in the house, including the kitchen. Then everyone says in chorus: "Ah, yes, but things aren't the same here. There simply aren't any French collectors, nor have there ever been."

This argument is clearly wrong, for were it true it would have been impossible to mount an exhibition like Passions Privées, now on at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, which comprises more than 1,100 works by more than 400 artists from 92 private collections of modern and contemporary art in France. Many collectors prefer to remain anonymous, but several personalities — such as Alain Delon, Gunther Sachs, Hubert de Givenchy and Claude Berri — have put their name to their pictures.

The show fills three floors and covers every wall, pillar, nook and cranny of the huge museum. You need plenty of stamina and a good memory to take it all in.

Quantity alone does not make for a good exhibition. But Passions Privées is of an extremely high quality. A stroll through the show yields one surprise after another: rather than arrange the pictures and sculptures in chronological order or according to artistic affinities, the organisers have deliberately chosen to keep works from the same private collection grouped together. So you find a Basquiat at the beginning as well as the end of the exhibition, once next to a Giacometti, then next to a Schnabel. And Giacometti himself is also to be found rubbing shoulders with Fautrier, Boltanski, Masson or Gonzalez-Torres.

Propinquity of this kind can be illuminating. It can also be purely fortuitous, a result of the way the works were acquired or have been hung. In most exhibitions the way one looks at paintings is partly conditioned by the position they occupy in the organisers' scheme of things. In this show, each exhibit is allowed to retain its singularity and fend for itself in a competitive context. This puts the visitor in the enjoyable position of being able to decide on his or her preferences, and free to linger or hurry on, as the case may be.

And anyone with a devious turn of mind can have fun trying to imagine the secret thoughts of lenders forced to measure themselves against each other — "Will thingummy's Dubuffet be better than mine?", or worse, "Why, this is the Miró that old so-and-so outbid me for . . ."

There is bound to be jealousy and resentment. But it is emulation of the noblest kind, since the exhibition organisers set themselves demanding standards. There was no question of accepting minor works, even when signed by famous artists. The show proves that not only are collectors alive and well and living in France but they often own paintings and sculptures of considerable and sometimes historic importance.

These include the portrait of a banker from Otto Dix's best period, a triptych by Kirchner, a superb iron sculpture by Gonzalez, a self-portrait by Masson, the drawings Masson did for the first edition of Georges Bataille's L'Histoire de l'Oeil (the same collector also owns Bellmer's illustrations for the second edition), Miró's Sand, Hélion's La Bande Rouge, a breathtaking series of paintings by Picabia and another by Michaux.

And there is much, much more — some wonderful pictures by Bacon, excellent works by Réquichot, a fine and very large Télémaque, and a 1929 Nude by Fautrier that belongs to Gunther Sachs. Other names that are well represented include Twombly, Soulages, Raysse, Naumann, Mitchell, Balthus, Rauschenberg, Freud, Bourgeois, Polke, Richter and Johns.

IT IS PLAINLY nonsense to claim that no one buys contemporary art in France. What about Micha Alberola, Nan Goldin, Cindy Sherman and Dan Graham, who are all present in the show? There is little point in further enumeration: Passions Privées offers fairly comprehensive coverage of Surrealism and Neo-Realism.

It would be rash to draw conclusions about tastes in art, for some collectors were reluctant to lend their pictures. One such gap resulted in our being deprived of several masterpieces, including some Bacons and a Rothko. Another problem was that the organisers' wishes or aesthetic preferences did not necessarily coincide with those of the owners when it came to deciding which works in a given collection should be included. That explains, but does not justify, the under-representation of the Support/Surface movement and the over-representation of the Neo-Conceptualists and Neo-Dadaists such as IFP, Cazal, Claude Rutault and Gonzalez-Torres.

That also explains why there are almost no examples of the abstract art of the fifties or sixties, even though abstract works were widely bought in France. Equally puzzling is the scarcity of such famous names as Picasso, Matisse, Dufy, Braque or Derain. Could it be that their works were too valuable to be lent?

What clearly emerges from the exhibition is that French collectors' favourite schools are Cubism, Surrealism and Neo-Realism, and that they have been less interested in German and American Expressionism, Futurism, and abstract art from central and eastern Europe.

Their idols are Ernst, Picabia, Michaux, Fautrier, Masson, Giacometti and Dubuffet, who has become the "official" modern artist of the past few decades. There are also many discriminating collectors who go for Gris, Léger, Brauner and Miró. All in all, the exhibition shows that French collectors love and have stuck up for every major movement in 20th century French art — which can hardly count as a surprise.

Passions Privées, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Closed Monday. Until March 24.

(December 22)

Dubuffet debunked

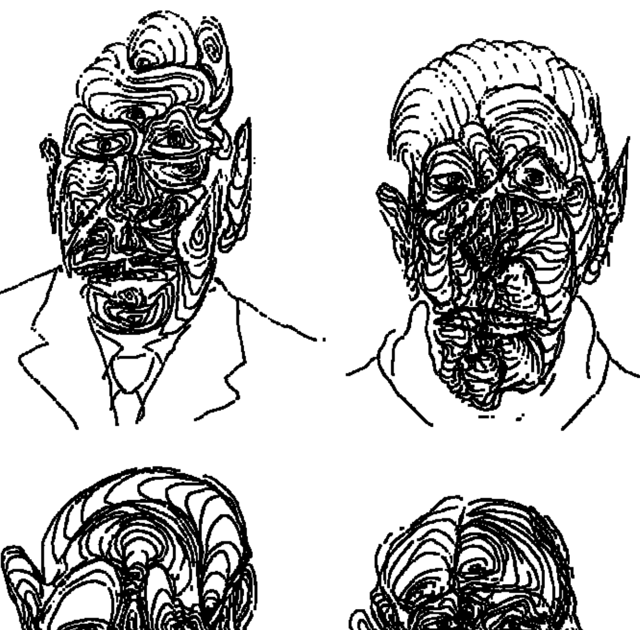
Philippe Dagen

Prospectus et Tous Écrits Suivants
Volumes III and IV
by Jean Dubuffet
Edited and annotated by Hubert Damisch
Gallimard 560pp/700pp
220 francs/250 francs

Correspondance
by Jean Dubuffet and Witold Gombrowicz
Gallimard 70pp
65 francs

I WAS looking forward to getting my teeth into two new volumes of Jean Dubuffet's writings, as well as his correspondence with Witold Gombrowicz, and to applauding this sworn enemy of "suffocating culture" and proud inventor of Art Brut. The dozens of forgotten texts and unpublished letters, accompanied by a full critical apparatus, seemed so attractive a prospect that they obscured a paradox: why were three more volumes (after the two already published) being devoted to this implacable foe of institutions and officialdom?

The opening pages of Prospectus et Tous Écrits Suivants are exhilarating: "Nothing cramps one's style as much as a deferential attitude." No one would disagree with that. "Culture adores enumerating and measuring; it is disorientated and incommoded by the innumerable: all its efforts are, on the contrary, directed at restricting numbers in every field and counting on the fingers of one hand." Ditto. Better even: "One often encounters, in a cultural, literary and artistic output, attitudes comparable to those of travel agencies specialising in package tours that offer a spot of adventure by including in their programme a lion hunt, a shipwreck and an invitation to meet a native chief."





Portraits of Jean Dubuffet by Pierre Bettencourt

The modern era bristles with such "cultural" pastimes, forced pilgrimages, group initiations, brick trading in pre-packaged relics and parodies of religion. What Dubuffet was already warning against in the sixties is now taking place in museums and exhibitions.

So far, one has no bone to pick with him. His contention that culture destroys art is a cause well worth espousing. But the word "art" needs to be understood in its broadest sense, from Bosch to the anonymous African artist, from a Khmer sculptor to Rodin, from Titian to Picasso. The trouble is that Dubuffet gradually shifts to a position where he rejects one form of art — from the Renaissance to the Impressionists — which has become "cultural", and advocates in its place an art that is *brut* (raw), non-cultural and stripped of all convention.

But the fact that all works of art, from every civilisation, become cultural "products" does not detract from their value. It simply shows that the general trend is towards an erosion of subversive meaning and the emergence of a form that has been reduced to silence.

Dubuffet is right to attack the big business of culture. But when he appeals for a counterculture, he reproduces the vices of the very people he most abominates — the sermonisers and the dispensers of academic honours. He sets himself up as a professor and a guru with strong opinions on everything, and as the only person entitled to bestow the Art Brut label.

The prefaces, the voluminous explanations of his own work, and the tone of his letters from the fifties onward are dauntingly serious and peremptory. By the seventies, after a series of retrospectives and awards, Dubuffet had become an "official" modern painter.

Contemporary history is full of examples of anarchists who turn into tyrants. Art Brut is no exception: in a very un-*brut* manner, Dubuffet began to use a very elegant rhetoric in his paintings. Taking his cue from the Cubists and Klee, he combined an apparently awkward drawing style with skilfully varied textural effects, producing first some excellent portraits, then attractive, easily enjoyed paintings with no hint of "anti-aestheticism".

Gombrowicz was the only one of Dubuffet's correspondents to point out this contradiction, and he did so with characteristic ruthlessness: "What a breed of liars artists are! The artist does not seek the truth; what he needs to do is produce a good picture or a good poem, and make a success of his oeuvre . . . You are a nihilist out of necessity."

When Gombrowicz goes for the jugular, Dubuffet tries to defend himself. He thinks up poetic metaphors and tells pretty stories of trees growing. But it is a waste of time. Gombrowicz keeps up the pressure: "Your way of seeing, feeling and understanding the world is too well-fed," he writes.

There can be no answer to that. Dubuffet evades the issue, then their correspondence becomes less frequent. But it is too late. Gombrowicz has hit the nail on the head. Art Brut is just another form of art for art's sake, or mannerism in the primitive mode.

After reading this ding-dong epistolary battle, everything comes into focus and one begins to understand the uneasy feeling one already had: throughout his life, Dubuffet talked *of nothing but art. He was not concerned with history or other people.* That this was so is demonstrated with embarrassing brutality by his behaviour in the second world war. In a previously unpublished text, "Biographie au Pas de Course", written shortly before his death in 1985, Dubuffet tells how he managed to thrive as a wine merchant during the German Occupation: "There was plenty of money to be made" in those times of shortages, when "a heart-warming climate of fraternisation established itself".

He goes on: "I had only a hazy idea of German ideologies, and I attributed exciting poetic virtues to them. I thought them capable of revitalising civic life, of replacing the appalling old sclerosis of the western world with inventive new ideas. I was elated by the notion of the treasures of the old German soul, which were very unfamiliar to me and shrouded in mystery. With great diligence I began to learn the German language, of which I could not speak a word."

There is not a single word, in the rest of his autobiographical account, that suggests even fleetingly that he regretted admiring those "inventive new ideas". One can only suppose that the walls of his studio were singularly thick.

(November 24)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

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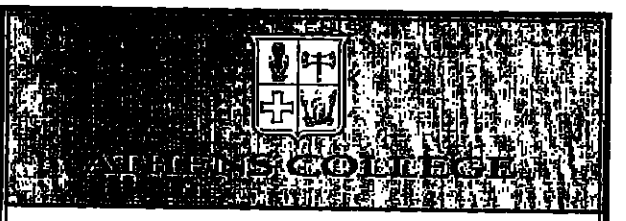
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Head bangers

Colin Luckhurst

IN MY part-time role as unpaid assistant shepherd to the lady shepherdess's flock of rare breed sheep here at The Droppings, the biggest single mistake I ever made came about as light levels sank in November and tupping time was upon us.

At the time we had one flock of Soays — primitive sheep, native to the St Kilda group of islands, far out in the Atlantic beyond the Hebrides, that were evacuated of their human population in the 1930s — and a larger flock of Black Welsh Mountain sheep.

Soays are attractive, fawn-coloured, deer-like sheep, very nervous and wary, and quite unlike the commercial white woollies of the serious farmer. From their remote island background they have the ability to pick a living from a few blades of grass on a bleak mountainside, but ours were rather spoiled on lush lowland pasture.

We had Soays for some years. Their ram, Donald, was a fine, aggressive specimen, well horned, strong and reminiscent of a wee Glaswegian head banger but without the charm. One year we had a good spring crop of Soay lambs — beautiful fawn-like creatures when tiny. And in the autumn we still had one ram lamb, Houdini (so called because he kept escaping the confines of the field), that had been kept separately from Donald, with his mother and other ewes through the summer months. He had not been worth taking to the butcher's because, despite all the talk about the low cholesterol quality of Soay meat, experience taught that he would fetch no more than £8 top whack at auction.

Tupping time, especially if you have more than one breed, requires careful thought and a strategically secure separation if unfortunate crosses are to be avoided — the Black Welsh Mountain ewes we had at the time had occasionally been tupped by Donald.

For the Soays that year we had arranged a field surrounded by solid post and rail fencing, high enough to be secure and to prevent Donald from getting out to the ewes in season close by. The mistake I made was that, without thinking, I put back into this field the ram lamb, with his mother, that had been kept apart from Donald for some months.

About 30 seconds after I had closed the gate all hell broke loose. Donald, sensing a sexual challenge, came in like a tank at his son. A nutting contest, of potentially fatal outcome, ensued. The ram lamb faced up to his father, lowered his head, and charged. The echoes of head-to-head combat resounded.

Fortunately, there were three of us on hand to sort out my foolish error. And we needed to because Donald would eventually, on body weight alone, have killed his son in his determination to establish dominance. We eventually caught the lamb and took him away even though he was giving a good account of himself in these shuddering charges.

Donald was always a problem. I remember one occasion, again at tupping time, when he could smell ewes in season on the land below us. He was either over or through the fence in record time and, with me in pursuit, was achieving sexual congress with one ewe after another as I chased after him. Three people and a roll of wire were needed to apprehend Donald and separate him from yet another conquest. His malevolent little eyes peered up at us when we finally detained him by the horns as if to say, "You would spoil the fun, wouldn't you?"

Chess Leonard Barden

GARRY KASPAROV beat off another robotic challenger in London last month when he scored 1.5-0.5 against Fritz 4, the 1995 world computer champion running on a Pentium processor. Though the machine can analyse at 172,000 positions per second, the fastest yet by a PC, the number-one human was in less danger than in August 1994, when he lost to Genius 2 in the Intel Grand Prix, or in May 1995, when he had a lost position before winning a return match.

Contests between world champions and machines are here to stay, and Kasparov is due to face the giant IBM mainframe Deep Blue, the successor to Deep Thought, which beat several top grandmasters in the late eighties early this year. But although computers are still improving, Kasparov believes they can be outfoxed by controlled strategic play and avoiding positions where the machine can impose itself by superior calculation.

Programmers are finding some tough obstacles to further big advances. In the first flush of enthusiasm after Genius and Fritz beat Kasparov in 1994, computer specialists believed that the days of human chess supremacy were numbered; now it looks as if machines are stronger at blitz, humans at classical slowplay time rates, while in rapid games of 25 minutes duration humans are fighting back.

Pentium Fritz 4-Garry Kasparov, first game

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 The strategic Nimzo-Indian is more suited to this occasion than Kasparov's normal complex King's Indian g6 and Bg7. **4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b6 7 Bg5 Ba6.**

Pentium's operator keyed in Bb7 **. . . 8 e3 d6 9 f3 . . .** so the machine counters what it perceives as the threat Bxg2. The move had to stand, giving Kasparov an early advantage.

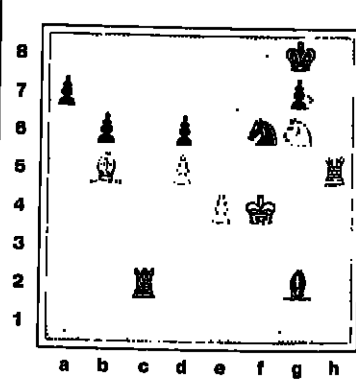
Nbd7 10 Bd3 h6 11 Bh4 c5 12 Rd1 Rc8 following the simple and good rule that rooks are well developed on the same file as the opposing queen. **13 Ne2 cxd4 14 Qxd4** If 14 exd4 d5. **Ne5 15 b3 Nxd3+ 16 Qxd3 d5 17 Qc3 Ne4!** Simplifying into a won endgame. **18 Qxg7+** Spectacular, but strategically no better than 18 Bxd8 Nxc3.

Kxg7 19 Bxd8 Rfxd8 20 fxe4 dxc4 21 bxc4 Rxd1+ 22 Kxd1 Rxc4 23 Kd2 Ra4! Kasparov ties down the white rook and exchanges the potentially active knight before making the obvious capture at e4.

24 Ra1 Bxe2 25 Kxe2 b5 26 Rb1 a6 27 Rb3 Rxe4 28 Rc3 Ra4 29 h3 h5 30 g3 f5 31 Rb3 Kf6 32 Rc3 Ke5 After stopping any serious white activity or counterplay, Kasparov infiltrates his king to mop up the a3 pawn and create a new queen.

33 Kf3 Kd5 34 Rd3+ Kc4 35 Rd6 Kb3 36 Rxe6 Kxa3 37 Ke2 a5 38 Re5 b4 39 Rb5 b3 40 Kd3 Kb2 41 h4 Ra1 42 Rxf5 a4 43 Rxh5 a3 44 Ra5 a2 45 h5 Rh1 46 Kc4 a1Q 47 Resigns.

No 2403



Igor Boudarevsky-Anatoly Ufimtsev, USSR 1936. White (to play) is two pawns down and about to lose a third. How, if at all, can he save the game?

No 2402: is a draw: 1 h8Q Rh2+ 2 Kg5 Rxh8 3 g7+ Kxg7 4 f6+ when Kf8 stalemates White and Kh7 5 Kh5 stalemates Black.

Quick crossword no. 296

Across

1 Seed covering (4)
3 Contrary — talk (8)
8 Exhibit (4)
9 Unmarried woman (8)
11 Relax! (4,2,4)
14 Confused mass (6)
15 Picture-taking device (6)
17 Crop watering (10)
20 Hair-splitting (8)
21 Abominable snowman (4)
22 Eased (8)
23 Cowshed (4)

Down

1 Be uncertain — hold back (8)
2 Leg cover (8)
4 Fishing hawk (6)
5 Brilliant teenage violinist (7-3)
6 Estimate — speed (4)
7 Nobleman (4)
10 Shooting practice area (5,5)
12 Childbirth (8)
13 Disease — ill-humour (8)
16 God-like (6)
18 Goad (4)
19 Hero (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

WHAT WAS the best-played hand of 1995? In the opinion of the world's bridge writers, it was this deal from the European Pairs Championship. Philippe Cronier, the declarer, is a French international player and one of the nicest people in top-level bridge; take his hand as South at love-all and see how you would have fared:

♠— ♥K65 ♦KJ10964 ♣AK73

You open the bidding with the obvious one diamond — but you are playing the French style of five-card majors and a strong no trump, so you do not promise more than three cards in diamonds for the moment. West makes a weak jump overcall of two spades, your partner passes and East jumps to four spades. What action do you take?

Cronier chose to double, which was primarily for takeout. This was an aggressive action facing a partner who could not act over two spades, but it is important not to go quietly at pairs when you have a distributional hand.

West passed and North bid four no trumps, asking Cronier to select the final contract. Philippe bid five diamonds, and all passed. West led the king of spades, and this was the problem that confronted the Frenchman:

♠J7
♥A974
♦852
♣Q1042

♠None
♥K65
♦KJ10964
♣AK73

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♠	No	4♠
Double	No	4NT	No
5♦	No	No	No

Take a moment to form your initial plan before discovering Cronier's line of play. South ruffed the opening lead and played a heart to the ace. He led the eight of diamonds from dummy, which East took with the ace. East led the queen of hearts, which Cronier won with the king as West followed. Now Cronier led his third heart, on which West showed out. East won and played a fourth heart, ruffed by South. You are at the crossroads; how do you continue?

It seemed clear that East had three trumps and West a singleton. West had shown up with a doubleton heart, and presumably had six spades for his initial overcall — with seven, he would probably have bid three spades rather than two spades.

This meant that West had four clubs, so the obvious line of crossing to the queen of clubs to repeat the trump finesse would lead to defeat, since West would have a club trick at the finish. This was the full deal:

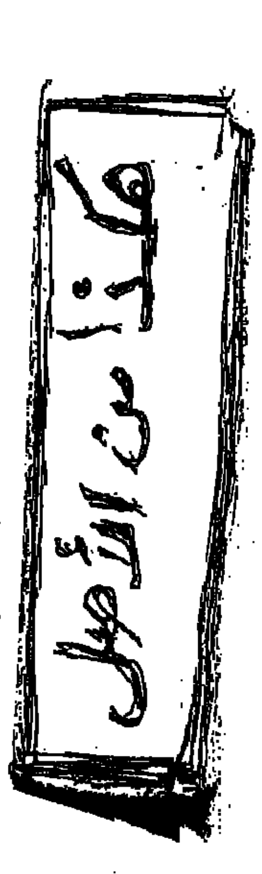
North
♠J7
♥A974
♦852
♣Q1042

West
♠AKQ1053
♥82
♦7
♣J865

East
♠98632
♥QJ103
♦AQ3
♣9

South
♠None
♥K65
♦KJ10964
♣AK73

After ruffing the fourth round of hearts, Cronier led a small club to dummy's ten! Then he took the finesse against East's queen of diamonds, drew trumps and claimed his contract. *Bien joué*, indeed!



End the silence

Suzanne Goldenberg in Rajasthan meets a lower-caste Indian activist seeking justice



Bhanwari Devi, a symbol of the brutality of life for a lower-caste village woman, has emerged as a heroine for activists PHOTO. A JAIETLY

FOR THE men who matter in the village of Bhateri, Rajasthan, evil comes in the shape of a stooped and painfully thin woman with a rough woollen shawl over her head.

She is Bhanwari Devi, a government community worker, whose determination to punish the two men she accuses of raping her has made her a heroine of Indian activists. She has won awards for bravery and led the Indian delegation to last year's Beijing women's conference. But many people feel extremely uncomfortable with a living reminder of the brutality of everyday life for a lower-caste village woman.

Bhanwari Devi lost the latest round in her three-year legal battle in November, but she is not disheartened. A judge in Jaipur acquitted the men of rape, saying it was a crime only committed by teenagers and not by middle-aged village notables of the type she had accused.

"He wasn't using his head," says Ms Devi, adding that she will appeal.

But her determination is rivalled by the fierceness of her opponents. The acquittal of the five men accused in connection with the 1992 attack was a signal for her enemies to come into the open. Last month, Ms Devi says four villagers attacked her and tried to strangle her.

Vijay Kumar Yadav, the police chief in Bassi 15 miles away, recorded a complaint, but accused Ms Devi of lying. "There is no truth in Bhanwari Devi's past rape case, or in this assault case," he says. "Today you will not find any women being abused in our villages. But because Bhanwari Devi is taking help from outsiders like these women activists, she is creating terror in the village. That is the terror: the terror of Bhanwari Devi."

Ms Devi's family has also suffered. Her husband, Mohan Lal, the village potter, says people hesitate to say hello in public. Her younger son says he has no friends in the village.

But until her troubles started, Ms Devi used to visit almost every one of the 200 homes in the village as a grassroots worker, or *sathin*, in the Rajasthan government's Women's Development Programme. The *sathins*, literally friends, were recruited a decade ago to pass on information about health care and education to other village women.

In 1992, government officials launched a campaign against child marriage, a custom which is still practised in Rajasthan although outlawed 60 years ago.

One of the richest men in the village was getting ready to marry off his daughter, aged one, to a bridegroom, aged two. When he failed to listen to Ms Devi's entreaties, she called in the police — on government instructions. The family was outraged. Soon after, Ms Devi and Mohan Lal were attacked and beaten by five men of the village, and she was raped by two of them.

Activists say the rape of lower-caste women is not uncommon in villages but generally goes unreported because of shame, or fear.

But Ms Devi defied tradition, and reported the assault. "If it is a question of their prestige, it is also a question of my respect — why should I keep my mouth shut?" she says.

She has become a symbol of empowerment, and of a new breed of Indian activist. Married at an age so young she cannot remember, Ms Devi had her first child at the age of 13 or 14. Although she married her own daughters off as children, she points out that that was before she became a *sathin*. Her youngest, Rameshwari, is still studying, one of only two girls from the village at secondary school.

And after all the furore, Ms Devi is still a *sathin*, although she doubts she can be as effective as before. "I am full of apprehension now," she says. "If I can't get justice for myself, then how can I help them?"

Letter from China Fuschia Dunlop

Demolition fever

JUST AFTER I arrived in Chengdu I went exploring along the river and found a long narrow street lined with ramshackle wooden houses, meandering its way towards the centre of the city. Tables and chairs were set up beneath the trees, and men and women sat around under the eaves of their houses, chatting, smoking and playing cards. Small shops sold sweets and cigarettes and a little teahouse spilled its guests and furniture on to the paving outside. It was a peaceful place to sit and think.

One week later I returned to find the street being demolished. Several houses had disappeared, and the rest were condemned, as I could see by the Chinese character for "demolish" which was chalked up like a sign of hopeless disease on the doors of the remaining buildings. Day by day, house by house the street slipped away and the people I had chatted to were shunted away to modern flats in the suburbs. Weeks later, there was nothing left, just a huge trench like a gash through the heart of the city.

The same thing is happening in many of the old neighbourhoods across Chengdu. The local government regards them as backward and is intent on demolishing the lot. The official plan is to build Chengdu into a modern metropolis within 10 years. The city's temples, the ones which survived after Chairman Mao's red guards blasted the old viceroy's palace to smithereens in the cultural revolution, are not in immediate danger of redevelopment. The casualties are the unexceptional old lanes which give the city so much of its charm and character.

I question my sentimentality for these creaking, cracking wooden houses. To be honest, I wouldn't like to live in one. They are small and cramped, a patchwork of wood and hardboard with newspaper stuffed in the cracks to fend off mosquitoes or the damp winter air. And there are no private lavatories — only the white-tiled public facilities a little way down the street.

But it's not just the houses which are being swept away in the frenzy of development. It's a way of life. Chengdu is famed for its teahouses and its tiny restaurants serving family specialities. Its winding backstreets are full of dumpling shops and small businesses — tailors doing piecework on manual sewing machines, shoemenders, vendors of bamboo and basketware. There are tiny teahouses where old people gather in the afternoons to play and hear traditional Sichuan opera. Many of these have already disappeared, the people who used to run them lost in concrete high-rises on the outskirts of the city. There's a real likelihood that Chengdu's fabled teahouse culture will all but vanish under the onslaught, leaving only a few large and famous establishments to pay lip service to a tradition that once flourished in every street.

As the demolition crews move in, the residents hang around for a while, as if nothing has happened. The lazy sprawl of card tables and bamboo chairs simply spreads out into the new clearings, and people sit playing mah-jong on the scattered heap of rubble that was someone's home the day before.

THE PACE of development is astonishing: whole neighbourhoods are razed to the ground in a couple of weeks. Among the winding streets, a gleaming futuristic city is springing up by stealth. Sometimes I sit in a peaceful teahouse in a leafy alley, sipping tea and nibbling watermelon seeds, lost in the mellow atmosphere of cards and idle conversation, only to glance up and find an immense skyscraper leering at me over the wooden rooftops.

Life in Chengdu at the moment has the bewildering quality of a strange dream in which familiar places appear changed out of all recognition — unmistakable in their identity and yet strangely unknown. Where was that restaurant I ate at last month? I've followed all the usual streets to get there and yet I can't find the right junction. Slowly I realise, almost incredulous, that this is the right junction, that this vast clearing of dust and mess is the place where four narrow streets once met. It happens all the time. Landmarks by which I used to navigate just disappear, new gateways spring up in alleys along which I used to cycle without interruption. In one year many of my favourite places have vanished. I'm almost afraid of what the new year will bring.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHY IS a capital "S" with two vertical lines running through it used as the dollar sign?

BILL BRYSON, in Made In America, refers to two theories. The first is that it originated as the letters "U" and "S" superimposed on each other. Bryson explains, however, that the symbol itself predates its application to US dollars, being used much earlier as a symbol for "peso". A more likely explanation, he says, is that it is a modified form of the pillars of Hercules, wrapped around with a scroll, found on old Spanish pieces of eight. — *David Handley, Whale Beach, Australia*

WHY ARE dried grapes referred to as sultanas? Does it have anything to do with "sultana" — the wife of a sultan?

AS A child I loved to eat grapes in Iran. There were many different types, which all had their own names: one particular one was called Soltani. If some product is really good then it can be offered to the sultan, a way of marketing a product. There are other products with a similar stamp of approval, such as sultani kebab. — *Feridun Ebbasi, Chingford*

A FULL cooked English breakfast is sometimes referred to as "the full Monty". Why?

IT IS held by some that in the second world war, Field Marshal Montgomery favoured a comprehensive approach to breakfast and that when the humble squaddies lined up in the morning some of them used to ask for "the full Monty" rather than just, say, egg and soldiers. Another explanation relates to Montague Burton, a tailor. When customers were asked whether they wanted a two or three-piece suit, those who wanted a waistcoat said they wanted "the full Monty". This also explains why the saying is often used in relation to items other than breakfast. — *Roger Williams, Beeston, Nottingham*

THE WORD "cleave" has two opposite meanings — either to stick together or split apart. Are there any other words that do the same thing?

TO "TAKE care of someone" has two completely opposite meanings as is amply illustrated in the film Pulp Fiction. — *Michael Robertson, Brescia, Italy*

MY DAUGHTER and most of her generation now use "bad" for "good" and "wicked" for "excellent". *Arthur Robinson, Versoix, Switzerland*

WHY DO the cockroaches in our bathroom always die on their backs?

BECAUSE they lost their footing while crossing the ceiling. — *E L Richardson, Stratford, Ontario, Canada*

Any answers?

WHAT is a continent? Is Europe a continent or just the western part of the Asian landmass? — *Geoff Schrader, Adelaide, South Australia*

WHY do human male voices "break" at puberty? Do other mammals exhibit this characteristic? — *A Adcock, Oxford*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ.

A Country Diary

Ray Collier

STRATHDEARN: Sightings of golden eagles are more often than not by sheer chance and such was the case last month when I had gone into a strath to look for wild goats and mountain hares. I had seen nothing on the seven-mile drive up the strath because the low winter sun reflected off the bonnet of the car as I drove through iced surface water. Parking on the bank of the River Findhorn, I used both binoculars and telescope to try to find goats and mountain hares, all to no avail. The goats could easily have been elsewhere on the steep slopes, partly covered with scree, but there should have been mountain hares, and, as the snow only lay on the high tops, they would have been conspicuous in their white winter coats. I walked to the nearby bridge to listen for the winter song of a dipper, but then there was a movement to my left and there was a golden eagle hunting over the open moorland and grassland. It was an adult, and the broad wings with the primaries jutted out like fingers as it circled, slowly drifting away to the hillside. It was one of those sightings that makes the hairs on the back of my head stand up, which is often the case on seeing such a bird. The goats were farther down the strath — grazing amidst the scree — and the tribe of 14 consisted of two old billies and nannies with last year's kids. The oldest billy was silvery and black and, judging by the ridges on the horns, it was about eight years old. As for the mountain hares, it took a great deal of searching before I found one high on the hillside. Normally this strath has hundreds of mountain hares and the sighting of only one must mean that the population has slumped.

But where has all the danger gone?

Canada's ravishing Cirque du Soleil is too seamlessly beautiful for legendary ring-master **Gerry Cottle**

I'VE BEEN a circus fan since I was eight, and a circus owner for the past 24 years. Last month, I spent 10 days touring Europe, during which I watched 14 performances by 14 separate circuses.

I saw some marvellous, exotic and memorable acts, including two tremendously sharp Russian clowns, Dik and Dok, an outstanding springboard act from a troupe called the Pouzanovs, and a brilliant Spanish juggler, decked out like a bullfighter, called Manuel Alvarez. I remember something specific about every one of the 14 shows that I saw. Every one, that is, except Cirque du Soleil.

Canada's Cirque du Soleil is incredible, extravagant, exquisite and has been hailed as one of the greatest circuses the world has ever seen. But there's one thing that the company's show, Saltimbanco, doesn't do. It doesn't provide you with memorable characters who stand out for their personality, their daring, or even for their over-the-top tackiness.

This is because Cirque du Soleil is an ensemble troupe; a troupe which buys in the very best physical circus skills (usually Russian or Chinese), and exploits them within a format which is a cocktail of performance art, theatre, dance and the kind of hi-tech effects you'd expect from a rock show or a pop video. And central to Cirque's style is the anonymity of the performers, hidden behind fantastic masks, and gloriously designed body-stockings.

I saw Cirque du Soleil in their massive touring tent in Düsseldorf. This month they are at London's Royal Albert Hall.

Saltimbanco is a dream-like, magical kaleidoscope of colour, music and images; a true — and truly ravishing — spectacle. The five-piece band creates an eerie soundtrack that even boasts its own unique language, the costumes are a delight, and each performer's face make-up is a perfect individual art-work. Cirque du Soleil has attracted some of the world's most brilliant performers who make the impossible look effortless within a set-up which is exquisitely styled, designed and operated.

And this really is the point where Cirque and I diverge in our view. These guys are just too good. The appearance of effortlessness is central to Saltimbanco. In more traditional circuses, the audience is always made aware — whether it's true or not — that there is an edge of danger.

When I saw the Pouzanovs, for example, one of the performers did a double somersault into the ring — by bouncing off a springboard on a pogo stick.

I didn't think it was safe and I didn't think he'd do it. And I've seen Chinese flying trapeze teams with three performers somersaulting in mid-air simultaneously, and I've thought there's no way they'd make it to the end of the routine. Now that may be because I'm a naive, gullible fool — for all my years in circus — but that's what I felt, and that's what many of us go to the circus to feel.

Circus has always appealed because of the mixture of fear and foolishness. There's the terror of high-wire acts, contrasted with the stupid slapstick antics of clowns, and in both areas there's a rough-edged, raw, competitive energy, and something more basic still, a kind of sexiness.

Cirque du Soleil is certainly sensual, but it's neither rough-edged nor raw. It depends on a collaborative rather than a competitive impetus, and so the thrill is in the perfection of the spectacle, and not in the adrenalin rush of wondering whether or not individual performers will achieve what they set out to do.

The circus was once denigrated for taming animals. Cirque du Soleil has tamed performers into units in a seamlessly beautiful ensemble spectacle. Does this represent the future for circus or is it just a one-off, delightful, and indefinable oddity within the ever-evolving world of the big top? Will circus take the shape of ever-more sophisticated "rock 'n' roll meets performance art" road-shows, or will spit and sawdust circus — and all the values that suggests — continue to dominate?

My guess is neither. Just as the innovations of such originals as Archaos have permeated the wider circus world — in a diluted form — so some elements of Cirque du Soleil's sophistication will be taken up elsewhere. But a wholesale revolution along Cirque's lines would be impossible. Perfection of this sort simply costs too much to create. And, anyway, there will always be more to circus than perfection.



Air and graceful . . . Cirque du Soleil blends performance art, theatre and hi-tech arena rock 'n' roll PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Women tell it like it is

MOVIE MANIA
Jonathan Freedland

WHITNEY Houston is not a preacher, though she seemed like one. Each time she spoke, her audience cried out in response. "That's right," they chorused, like a congregation at one of Washington's countless black churches. "Hmm-hmm, say it girl."

Except this was not a church, but a cinema. And Whitney Houston was not preaching, but on screen in the first smash hit of 1996: Waiting To Exhale, the movie version of a novel about four black professional women and their search for the right man.

The overwhelmingly black audience at Washington's Union Station cinema was proof that, since opening as the number one film in America, Waiting is no longer a mere movie. It's a social phenomenon.

African-American women have hailed the film as "our Million Man March" — their answer to the all-male black rally that filled Washington last October.

"Go, girl!" cried the audience in unison, when Bernadine, played by Angela Bassett, filled her cheating husband's BMW with his suits, doused it in petrol and torched the lot. His crime: he had just told Bernadine he was leaving her — for a white woman.

Never for a moment was the cinema silent. "Hal-lo," the audience called as love interest Wesley Snipes came into view. "Swing, girl," they urged as portly Gloria wiggled her way past a new suitor.

When Whitney Houston was submitted to a rapid, no-foreplay clinch, the auditorium erupted. "Hold on baby, I'm on my way," said the young on-screen lover, unable to contain himself. The rest of the scene was greeted by whoops, cheers and laughter.

"I wouldn't shake that man's hand," muttered Anita Bonner, as Bernadine made peace with her ex after winning a chunky alimony settlement. "She did the right thing, honey," said Anita's husband, Calvin.

The Union Station cinema has become used to an audience-participation tradition among the mainly black community it serves. A sign headlined "Yakety Yak!" reminds patrons of the "two shushes" rule — be warned over noise twice and you're out.

But Waiting To Exhale is a special case. "You can relate to it," said Sarah Jones, a secretary at the Department of Commerce. "You've thought it before, and it's like, finally someone said it."

Actress Lela Rochon has said she liked making the film because, for once, black women were not shown as "hookers, strippers and on welfare". Critics have attacked the film and the source novel for damning portrayals of black men, but the Washington crowd had no problem with the view that relationships with married men or crack-heads are doomed. "They're behind bars, they've got bad credit, they want white women, they're ugly, and they've got little dicks that can't fuck," say the four characters during one men-bashing session.

Actually, the list went on, but the rest was inaudible — swamped by the noise of laughter, high-fives and cheers.

Familiarity breeds content

CHAMBER MUSIC
Andrew Clements

A DISTINGUISHED critic once suggested that performances and recordings of the supreme musical masterpieces should be rationed, so their unique qualities might be preserved.

Once upon a time a cycle of the Beethoven quartets in the concert hall was a rare event, but this January London concert-goers have the possibility of hearing two complete cycles within the space of three weeks. At the end of the month on the South Bank, the American Emerson Quartet begin their survey, and last week in the Wigmore Hall the Lindsay Quartet started out on their six-concert pilgrimage.

There is no danger, with the Lindsay, of familiarity diminishing the impact of these extraordinary works. There is no other string quartet active today that more faithfully and honestly responds to the quartet's multiple moods, presents their world more comprehensively and refuses to impose a glib stereotype on the music for the sake of cosmetic effect. Listening to the Lindsay is not always a comfortable experience — there are surface imperfections in their playing — but the honesty and musical sense are never in doubt.

Their project includes not just the familiar 16 quartets but an extra work, and that was the piece that opened this first concert. The Quartet in F major, with the catalogue number of H64, is Beethoven's own arrangement of his F major Piano Sonata Op 14 no 1. It is a seamless piece of retailoring, in which the translations from keyboard figuration to string articulation have been joined invisibly. It was deftly played, but the response was not quite as immediately inventive as it might be.

The major effort was being saved for the A minor Quartet Op 132. Each of the Lindsay's concerts includes one of the late quartets — they will play the B flat Op 130 twice, the first time ending with the Grosse Fuge, the second time with the substitute finale. The journey from the world of Op 18, with its origins in the works of Haydn and Mozart, to this totally new musical universe, was a startling one, and their playing registered its sense of wonder — dappled with the tiniest expressive nudges and promptings in the faster music, drawn in fine, eloquent lines in the slower sections, and with the great Hymn of Thanksgiving laid out in a sequence of austerely sculpted paragraphs.

Classic clowning around

THEATRE
Robin Thornber

HERE is the best antidote to tinsel you could hope to find. The Manchester Royal Exchange's intellectual pretensions are so hyped that the company sometimes seems uncomfortable letting its hair down. This time they've got it right.

Animal Crackers, which runs until February 3, claims to be a stage version of the Marx Brothers' film, satirising pre-war New York high society. But as it contains a spoof Riverdance I suspect there are elements to this show, directed by Gregory Hersov and Emil Wolk, that weren't in the original.

Ben Keaton gives a glorious impersonation of Groucho, catching his deadpan delivery of pomposity-puncturing one-liners. On the first night this included wicked ad-libbing when James Smith (playing the pretentious financier and art fancier) fumbled his lines.

What stole the show for me was Toby Sedgwick's sublime mime as the Professor — classical, mute clowning at the international level of a Charlie Cairoli or Marcel Marceau.

With his expressively rubber face, poacher's-pocket coat and cartoon-strip movement, his was timeless physical comedy at its very best — consummate *commedia dell' arte*. Here is the source of all the best comedy of our generation, from the morbidity of Hancock to the surrealism of the Goons and Mr Bean.

In any other company Joseph Alessi's Italianate musician would have been outstanding. But here the quality runs right through, from the romantic duo (Sarah Redmond as operatic ingenue, Rhashan Stone as her lover) to the chorus troupe "of a thousand disguises".

Beautifully designed by David Short and lit by Vince Herbert, the show combines this company's gift for elegant classics with Emil Wolk's outrageously grotesque physical humour.

The irony and dry wit will appeal to the younger audiences the Royal Exchange is at last reaching, but there's something for everyone and the sheer theatrical skill is overwhelming — approaching a justification for the company's claim to be the national theatre of the North.

Damage limitation . . . Juliette Binoche in The Horseman On The Roof

Riders of the storm

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

JEAN-PAUL Rappeneau's bustling Cyrano De Bergerac was thought a considerable risk to make but turned out to be one of the most successful European films of recent years. That, however, is nothing compared with the risk taken with his latest film, **The Horseman on the Roof**, probably the most expensive French film ever made. Will this romantic historical epic, set in Provence in the 1830s and culled from Jean Giono's 1950s novel, justify its 130 days of shooting, more than 100 sets and almost 1,000 specially made costumes? It seems unlikely. One of the main reasons is that, unlike Cyrano, where you simply have to plough through a busy plot and watch Gérard Depardieu's star performance, this is a story where nothing much happens. Its two star-crossed lovers never consummate their mutual passion, except perhaps in a massage scene in which one cures the other of the ravages of cholera.

The massager is Olivier Martinez as a young Italian hussar who flees to Provence, where he finds the disease sweeping the countryside and a lynch mob who suspect him of poisoning a well. Hiding in an apparently empty house, he comes across Juliette Binoche's young married woman who feeds him and then disappears.

He meets her again, only to learn that she is married and searching for her husband, a much older man. The hussar follows her and the pair survive everything fate can throw at them.

The film is gorgeous to look at, a bit like a romanticised and Europeanised Western. But though supposed to be more mature than her escort, it is difficult for Binoche to give her best against an admittedly decorative block of wood who has to suggest dash, gallantry and utter dedication as well as burgeoning love, but can't really manage more than a fraction of each.

It never rains but it pours in David Fincher's **Seven**, an urban thriller set in New York which paints the city as a wet, windy and dilapidated hell-hole in which the physical darkness mirrors the mind-set of the twisted serial killer its cop buddies chase.

This is a contemporary film noir and, amazingly, audiences have taken to it in the United States. Generally, such films, like Michael Mann's Manhunter, barely survive on home territory and have to gather their main plaudits abroad.

Perhaps it is the combination of Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman as the two cops — one a young thruster who thinks he knows all the answers, the other an almost burnt out veteran who knows he doesn't — that accounts for its success.

As likely, it's the twist Andrew Kevin Walker's story gradually elucidates — this killer has a working acquaintance with Dante's Divine Comedy and bases his murders on the seven deadly sins of gluttony, avarice, sloth, lust, pride, envy and wrath.

But Seven contains more style than content, and suffers from that other deadly sin of self-consciousness. It is, like Silence Of The Lambs, a genuine original which, if it leaves a brackish taste in the mouth, nevertheless keeps you on the edge of your seat.

Be warned: Lars von Trier's **The Kingdom** lasts more than four hours, by the end of which your jaw will be trailing on the ground in disbelief, *writes Jonathan Romney*. You're left wanting more, but von Trier signs off with an outrageous cliffhanger finale and the words "To be continued . . ."

The Kingdom, which started life as a Danish TV series, has all the jolly morbidity you expect from the new school of hospital soap. These days the patient always dies, transplant hearts tend to get used as footballs, and the scalpel is usually left somewhere extremely inconvenient. But we've never seen chaos quite like it's done in The Kingdom — there's a phantom ambulance whizzing round the streets of Copenhagen, two slavering hell-hounds, and the perenially sinister Udo Kier lurking on the sidelines. This is the Cold Comfort Farm of hospital soap, not so much a matter of something rotten in the state of Denmark as something nasty in the lift shaft.

Amid all the occult japery, what keeps The Kingdom engrossing is the sharpness of the characterisation. Von Trier keeps several plot threads unfurling with devillish wit, but films it all in a grainy vérité style, which grounds the narrative excess in an incongruous realism.

Brecht's inheritance

OBITUARY
Heiner Müller

HEINER MÜLLER, who has died of cancer aged 66, was the most influential German playwright since Bertolt Brecht. A committed Marxist and a passionate humanist who rejected every form of ideological rigidity, he pursued in his work a powerful critique of both the failed socialist experiment in his native East Germany and of the barbarity of capitalism.

Although the most widely performed playwright in both Germanies during the 1980s, his complex, highly unconventional plays were often greeted with bewilderment by audiences. The East German authorities condemned him as an "historical pessimist" and banned most of his work for more than two decades.

Born into a family of Social Democrats in Saxony, Müller first experienced the reality of life under a dictatorship at the age of four, when his father was imprisoned in a concentration camp within months of Hitler's rise to power.

Müller moved to East Berlin in 1951 and, after some years as a clerk and a journalist, joined Brecht at the Berliner Ensemble towards the end of the 1950s. His first play, Der Lohndrucker, was based on the story of Hans Garbe, a heroic East German bricklayer who risked his life repairing a red-hot blast furnace in order to keep his factory's output flowing.

Müller undermines the official, propagandist interpretation of the story by questioning Garbe's motivation. Der Lohndrucker became the target of a party campaign against politically unreliable drama a year later and disappeared from the East German repertoire until 1988.

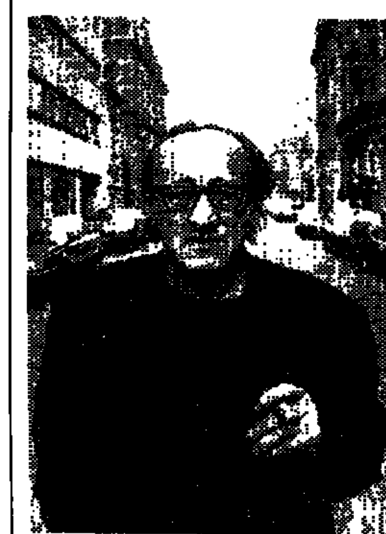
Müller's increasing disillusionment with state socialism did nothing to blunt his contempt for the capitalist alternative, which he saw as an oppressive and ultimately self-destructive system of barbarism.

His plays became increasingly experimental in structure, often dispensing with plot and dialogue altogether in favour of lengthy monologues.

Although he was allowed to travel freely in the West during the 1980s, he continued to live in his untidy, rambling flat overlooking the East Berlin zoo where he would sit contentedly amidst the chaos, peering through thick glasses and puffing on a huge cigar as he worked his way through his daily bottle of Johnnie Walker Black Label.

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, he seized every opportunity to condemn what he saw as the economic colonisation of the former East Germany by the West.

The last three years of his life were spent back in the cradle of his theatrical career, Brecht's Berliner Ensemble. Originally part of a five-strong team of artistic directors, Müller assumed complete control last year after his west German co-director, Peter Zadek, stormed out, accusing Müller of promoting a revival of fascism by producing bleak, violent plays. Müller described the relationship between himself and Zadek as a mirror-image of the experience of German reunification. "The more we got to know about each other, the less we wanted to know each other," he said.



Heiner Müller: his plays were banned for 20 years

Denis Staunton

Heiner Müller, dramatist, born January 9, 1929; died December 30, 1995

Snack-happy in Graceland

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THE BURGER and the King (BBC2) made me think of Henry VIII who exploded. After death, naturally. In life it would have caused comment.

After Elvis's death the medical investigator said, "Mr Presley underwent his terminal event while he was on the commode. His colon was impacted with a clay-like substance which would have made it difficult, if not impossible, to have a bowel movement." You can only turn your whitening face to the wall.

Presley ate until he was shrouded in his own suet. He once flew to Denver, ordered 22 torpedo sandwiches at 42,000 calories a time and flew home without leaving his jet. His favourite food was cheeseburgers and fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches. As he was carried into the Memphis funeral home by three undertakers instead of the usual two, a sign glowed in the night. Burger King, 99 cents. I was talking to Conway Twitty once and noticed a dreamy, luminous look steal over his face. What, I asked hopefully, was he thinking about? Black-eyed peas, he said simply. We were in the Savoy.

Elvis had been a hungry child in Tupelo, Mississippi, during the depression. In Tupelo they ate pigs' ears, trotters, chicken feet called chitlins, squirrel, possum. "You'd eat anything that didn't eat you," said the old man in the stetson tucking into his fried squirrel. Elvis used to eat with his hands. His pet chimp, which ate with them, was thought to have pretty good table manners. For Graceland.

Like Howard Hughes, his obsession was fed by his own household. When he was in hospital on a strict diet, his nurse made him banana puddings with meringue topping. Mary, his cook at Graceland, smuggled in hot dogs on his orders.

The Peacock Spring (BBC1) and *Heartstones* (Meridian) had an odd family resemblance. Decorative, rich, slow-growing stories, each with a father, his mistress and his two young daughters.

The first sentence of Heartstones by Ruth Rendell — "I was never close to my mother so at didn't occur to me at the time she might have been poisoned" — could not be faulted but, after that, the story went slack. I found I was admiring the intensity of Emily Mortimer (daughter of John Mortimer) and, far more ominous, the colour of the paint on the stairs.

The Peacock Spring by Rumer Godden was the one to choose. It had all the expected Indian colour and a vividly shrill performance from Jennifer Hall (eerily like her mother, Leslie Caron) as a whip-wielding, exotically neurotic, wicked stepmother.

Both plays are an object lesson in naming daughters. Do not call your child Halcyon, Elvira or Despina. Woe will almost certainly betide.

All-rounder king

David Horspool

King Alfred the Great
by Alfred P Smyth
Oxford 744pp £25

Alfred the Great
by David Sturdy
Constable 268pp £18.95

IN 1899, a thousand years after Alfred the Great's death, England was in the grip of Alfred mania. Statues were erected, books written, and Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had even named their son after the hero-king. But the Victorians were not the originators of the Alfred myth. Nearly every passing century since 899 has seen another accretion to his legend, since the 11th century story of the cakes. It is only in our own time that Alfred has become the almost exclusive property of historians and schoolchildren. Following the first world war, Alfred's Teutonic roots made him less palatable to the public.

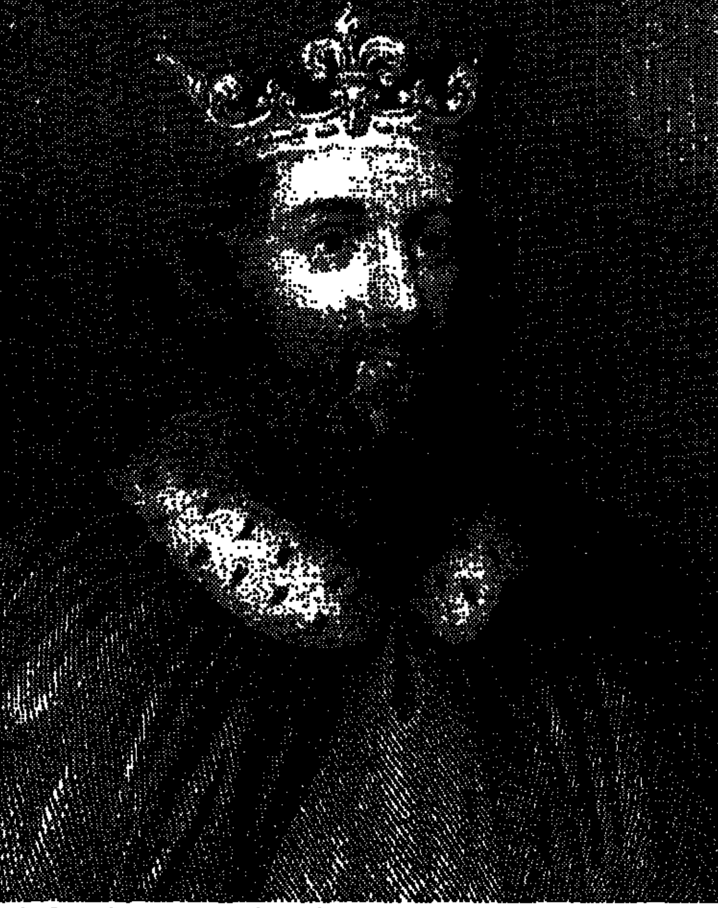
His namesake Alfred Smyth's monumental and polemical biography demonstrates that not many of the facts behind the legend are uncontested. But few dispute the core of the story, as witnessed by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Alfred's own writings. Most crucially, he saw off a Viking force which threatened to wipe out Anglo-Saxon rule in England. By the time the Vikings turned their attentions to Wessex, Alfred's homeland, while he was still a boy, they had killed the rulers of two of the three other major kingdoms in ninth century England. So it seems reasonable to assume that Alfred was fighting for his physical as well as his political survival when, as king, he at last won a convincing victory at Edington in 878.

As the youngest of five sons, Alfred can never have expected to inherit the crown of Wessex, despite the indications in the Chronicle that he was his father's favourite. But he took advantage of the bad luck of his elder brothers by ensuring that his offspring were more likely to inherit than theirs. Largely as a result of these precautions, it was under the House of Alfred that England was united. This legacy must have played an important part in his appeal to the Victorians, who liked to think that the centre of their empire had an ancient pedigree.

Both Smyth and Sturdy take on the mythical as well as the historical Alfred, and both discuss the best known myth of all — the cakes. Alfred, on the run from the Vikings in Somerset, before he mustered his army for the last-ditch victory at Edington, took refuge with a swineherd, whose wife scolded him for neglecting the burning loaves in the oven. Although David Sturdy airily proposes, in a book which is often a stodgy mixture of undigested source material and speculation, that the story "must be the last echo of an incident from a great epic poem", it is usually accepted as a fable.

Other stories, however, such as his winning a reading competition against his brothers as a boy, have been more readily accepted. It is their source, and the trustworthiness of it, which is the origin of a bitter dispute surrounding Smyth's book. These stories come from a Life of King Alfred reputedly written during his lifetime, by Bishop Asser of Sherborne, which has been highly valued as a unique contemporary life of an Anglo-Saxon king.

Smyth argues persuasively that Asser's Life is an early 11th century forgery. His attack is based on a general distrust of the hagiographical scheme of the work (which seems to bend the narrative to fit the framework of a secular saint's life) and on Asser's many errors and contradictions.



Alfred: no longer a saint but still a great medieval king

Smyth's dismissal of Asser allows him to present a more convincing picture of an early medieval king. He rejects, for example, Asser's description of Alfred as chronically ill, first with piles, and then with "another more severe illness" which was supposed to have plagued him all through the time when he was fighting like a wild boar against the Danes.

Smyth's Alfred, moreover, not only fights the Danes, he negotiates with them; even after the victory at Edington, Smyth argues, Alfred is likely to have paid off a largely intact Viking force. And as well as being a spreader of the Christian message, he was willing to profit from the devastation wreaked on the Church by the Viking invasions. This Alfred is a medieval "all-rounder" but he is particularly admired as a scholar-monarch. Smyth's detailed and pugnaciously argued book shows a conception of scholarship as a battlefield similar to the "killing grounds" of the Viking wars. It is no wonder that for him, even if Alfred is no longer the saint in Asser, he remains "truly a great king".

Power of the grapes of wrath

Sean O'Brien

Drink: An Informal Social History
by Andrew Barr
Bantam 400pp £16.99

IN 1656, Mehmed Koprulu, Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire, learning of the popularity of coffee houses, donned a disguise and went to see for himself. He was alarmed to find the customers making free with their opinions, criticising the ruling council and in general behaving as though the conduct of the state were any of their business. The Vizier then prohibited such gathering-places. Those who infringed the law would be in the first instance cudgelled; if found guilty of a second offence they would be sewn into a leather bag and hurled into the Bosphorus. Drink: An Informal Social History is liberally spiced with these side-splitters. History, according to Andrew Barr, is largely staffed with crackpots and morons. The subsequent reflection that the stories are here because they're true is sobering, and leads the reader on to the book's central theme, which is power.

During the first world war Lloyd George declared: "We are fighting Germany, Austria and drink; and, as far as I can see, the greatest of these three deadly foes is drink." The first war marked a watershed in the history of drink in Britain, for it saw the introduction of the strict licensing laws which it has taken most of this century to change. The ostensible reason for the end of all-day opening was to ensure that the factory workers were in a condition to produce the munitions and equipment with which to prosecute the war. The necessities of the time should not, however, disguise the state's and the upper classes' perennial anxiety about the behaviour and attitudes of the lower orders.

Barr ranges widely about the world (from an admittedly European perspective); he is particularly interesting in his readings of the relations between the powers-that-be and alcohol in the British Isles. He charts a complex set of negotiations between morality and economics: at one time gin becomes a patriotic product because it enables agricultural interests to offload surplus corn. At another, Hogarth's Gin Lane depicts an urban catastrophe of alcoholism, sterility, infant mortality and a declining population in the capital.

The largest beneficiary of Prohibition, for example, appears to have been Canada, where liquor revenues boomed because the authorities had the foresight to tax what then became illegal imports to the US. As a contemporary observer remarked: "It was impossible to keep liquor from dripping through a dotted red line."

PROHIBITION itself is something that Britain was spared. Out of a muddle of legislation, policy shifts, political and street-level resistance and, above all, the ingenuity of thirst, came a kind of accommodation between the English Sunday, church, state, the brewer and the punter. Barr's absorbing study deliberately reaches beyond its apparent confines to depict, repeatedly and amusingly, the fissure between a society's ideas of itself and its true nature. While, behind a bombardment of facts, Barr is quietly making a libertarian case and implying that drink gets the blame for ills produced elsewhere, the underlying truth seems to be that drink is an enduring site of conflict between order and chaos, pleasure and duty, the individual and authority and so on. People will break any law in order to obtain or, if necessary, manufacture liquor.

The conflict over drink appears necessary in itself. A nation's success in dealing with drink should perhaps be judged by its capacity to recognise the ambiguous nature of this ancient pleasure. In his conclusion Barr harks back to the cult of Dionysus, suggesting that its vinous symbolism of the seasons, of death and rebirth, was in turn domesticated by worshippers of Christ, the "true vine" of St John's Gospel. Yet Barr's first source for Dionysus is Euripides's Bacchae, in which the intoxicated followers of the insulted god tear a victim limb from limb — an image which seems to present a considerable challenge to incorporation, though similar practices have persisted in numerous Christian societies.

It would be interesting to read a closer inspection by Barr of the drinking lives of the barely visible mass of working-class people to whom drink has apparently been a necessity for survival, but whose views are not much recorded.

There is little sense of the political fact of their lives, or of the mediating function of drink for the notoriously drunken British. Are they too drunk to rebel? Or is drunkenness a rebellion? They remain a mass, a nation without the citizenship of pen and paper. The Times editorialises. They riot. They also persist with alcoholic lemonade in place of port.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Sylvie, by Gerard de Nerval, trs Richard Sieburth (Penguin Syrens, £2.99)

ABSOLUTELY exquisite novella, which, in so far as this is remotely possible or plausible, does in 60 pages what A La Recherché does at considerably greater length (Proust himself acknowledged this as one of his inspirations). A story of nostalgia, regret, lost love, intricately wrought and profoundly moving. "Illusions fall away one after another like the husks of a fruit, and that fruit is experience."

All the Trouble in the World, by P J O'Rourke (Picador, £6.99)

SUBTITLE: "The lighter side of famine, pestilence, destruction and death." You're meant, of course, not to take offence at this, because the last thing you want to be accused of is having no sense of humour. This is a string of O'Rourke's "pensées" on the state of the world, affable enough in its way, if you can put up with his continual bafflement that the world is not as well run as, say, Fremantle, California. A prime example of a writer who has built a successful career on one joke.

The Decadent Cookbook, ed Alex Martin & Jerome Fletcher (Dedalus, £8.99)

NOT JUST fun but useful, containing workable recipes for Panda Paw Casserole, Cat in Tomato Sauce, and Dog à la Béti ("prior to being killed, the dog should be tied to a post for a day and hit with small sticks, to 'shift' the fat in the adipose tissue"), myriad blood sausage recipes, a recipe for aye-aye, of which some 20 remain in the wild, and stories by Louis de Bernières, Huysmans, inevitably, and Charles Lamb on sucking pig. Not, as you will have gathered, for the squeamish.

Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties, by Ian Macdonald (Pimlico, £8.99)

WHAT WITH one thing and another — that creepy, botched new single, the homage of Oasis, the anthology — you can't get away from the Beatles these days. Beatlapathy may be setting in. Macdonald's book, though, is no warmed-over hagiography. Every song the band released is the occasion for a mini-essay, detailing recording techniques, cultural context, musical influences, highly plausible stabs at the band's state of mind, what drugs they were on, etc. No other book traces the arc of their career with anything approaching this level of insight or sustained and valuable criticism. Did the Beatles invent, lead or closely follow fashion? What "was" all the fuss about? This book answers all these questions and more, honestly and rigorously; Macdonald combines musical analysis and acute historical awareness with jaw-dropping facility.

Passion and fetish as high fashion

Eve MacSweeney

The Literary Companion to Fashion
by Colin McDowell
Sinclair-Stevenson 452pp £20

"*COSTUME*, dandaical or not, is in the highest degree expressive, nor is there any type it may not express," wrote Max Beerbohm in 1896. It was thought so expressive by the men of Pongo, Nigeria, that they obliged their wives to go naked so as not to tempt the men of other tribes, as clothing might have done.

The dilemma of fashion, which no one really escapes, is that to ignore it you have first to consider it: Lord Chesterfield, for example, is twice quoted in this collection admonishing his son: "Dress is a very foolish thing; and yet it is a very foolish thing for a man not to be well dressed . . ." And though the idea of fashion is greeted with marked ambivalence by the British, we all wear clothes and are familiar with their power to make us anxious, self-satisfied, seductive, mortified, enviable or ridiculous. McDowell would appear to have hit on a rich vein.

The basis of his selection, however, seems to shy away from clothing at its most eloquent. Drawn mainly from the 19th and early 20th centuries, with occasional surprises such as Bret Easton Ellis and Thomas Pynchon, he divides his material into prosaic and often woolly categories — The Power of Clothes, The Practical Approach, Behind the Scenes, etc. He has a taste for hearty humour, rollicking rhyme and the niceties of convention, and seems at his most comfortable detailing the fastidious etiquette of the 19th century dandy, and, in a chapter entitled The Glitter of the Great and Fashionable, indulging in protracted inventories of the aristocratic wardrobe.

These historical excerpts tend to be tediously elaborate rather than vivid, with rare exceptions, such as a passage from The London Magazine in 1768, in which the writer visits an elderly aunt having her hair done after nine weeks without washing: "When Mr Gilchrist opened my aunt's head, as he called it, I must confess its effluvias affected my sense of smelling disagreeably, which stench, however, did not surprise me when I observed the great variety of materials employed in raising the dirty fabrick. False locks to supply the great deficiency of native hair, pomatum with profusion, greasy wool to bolster up the adopted locks, and grey powder to conceal at once age and dirt, and all these caulked together by pins of an indecent length and corresponding color. When the comb was applied to the natural hair, I observed swarms of animalculas running about in the utmost consternation . . ."

Give a damn . . . Scarlett and Rhett find fashionable love

There are some big scenes here: Scarlett O'Hara puts in a couple of appearances, as does Mrs de Winter when she unwittingly appears dressed as Rebecca. But on the whole, McDowell's examples are more literal than literary, as if grabbing at references to clothes without heed to content or meaning, so that the power of clothes is surprisingly little in evidence.

Fashion, in its purest sense, is about passion and fetish, of which only glimpses surface here, in the world of French fashion, the corrupting power of clothes, the misogyny of some couturiers, or the sheer sensuousness of the narrator's skills as a seamstress in Alice Walker's The Color Purple. In a brilliant passage from Mabel Barnes Grundy's An Undressed Heroine, a woman, uncharacteristically well-dressed one evening, accuses her lover of "making love to my clothes" and senses that, should she marry him, his love would fall to "dust and ashes at my unsmart feet".

Ultimately, McDowell falls in with the moralists' prejudice that clothes are superficial by treating them as so, rather than as a medium of expression. Clothes as description are dull. Clothes as insight and emotion, on the other hand, do justice to both literature and fashion.

God comes to Manhattan

Natasha Walter

Mr Ives' Christmas
by Oscar Hijuelos
Hodder & Stoughton 248pp £15.99

OSCAR HIJUELOS has a rare talent. Rare, as in unusual, and rare like a steak — juicy, tender and full of blood. His breakthrough novel, The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, was a hymn to Cuban music, plump thighs and perfumed crotches. His new novel, Mr Ives' Christmas, is altogether less fleshy, even if it doesn't exclude the odd excursion into the glossy sexuality that has become his trademark.

Spirituality, not sensuality, is the point. This is the tale of a foundling boy, with — one is led to believe — some Hispanic blood. In a nice old-fashioned picaresque structure, we watch Mr Ives as a child in a care home, then being adopted, finding his talents as an artist, making close friends with Hispanics, getting married to a beautiful American girl and having a beloved son. Then this sweetly satisfying American dream of the small man's success is blown apart one winter day when Ives's son is shot dead on the street.

The sudden intrusion of cruel meaninglessness leads Mr Ives to search desperately for the world's meaning. He does so by reading all kinds of half-baked tracts, by praying too much and going to church, and by making contact with his son's murderer, whom he eventually meets and forgives. But this being Hijuelos, the spirituality comes with a distinct sensual punch. At one point, when Ives is sketching in a life class and the male model becomes fiercely aroused, the model "began to produce from his penis a substantial volume of a well-known primal resin, the color of moonlit pearl." And yet, is there a touch of easy listening about Hijuelos? He plays with grand themes, but only dares to do so by making everything just a little dinky. In the very first paragraph of the novel we learn that Ives was "not especially bright", "not wildly funny", and wore a black-ribboned straw boater, "which gave him a jaunty air". You can almost feel the narrator patting him on the head.

Indeed, his characters are always so neatly packaged, there hardly seems any space for the emotional loose ends that would make their next step intriguing. The crowded, wide-screen dramas of his earlier novels are therefore more successful than this little meditation on one man's story, which would require some existential force to spark it into life. Hijuelos is far better at depicting the delights of the sensual world than the nebulous dreams of the next world.

Leader in a crisis

Frank Johnson

The Guardian Year '95
ed Georgina Henry
Fourth Estate 308pp £12.99

THE GUARDIAN is used to commenting on, say, Bosnia, Rwanda, Palestine, Ireland. But in May 1995 it decided to comment on a crisis. For that was the fateful month in which Dr Germaine Greer attacked Ms Suzanne Moore. All buyers of The Guardian Year '95 will turn first to the extracts from that troubled time.

But Guardian readers were not the first to learn of the gathering storm. Dr Greer's aggression against Ms Moore took place, not in the Guardian, of which she was then a columnist, but in the Spectator — the Guardian having declined to print it. Dr Greer's excuse was that she was only responding to an attack on her by Ms Moore in some diary column; something to do with Dr Greer's womb. Whoever struck first, the Guardian was now faced with civil war. It did what its most famous editor, C P Scott, would have done. It wrote a leader.

The leader listed Dr Greer's atrocities against Ms Moore. They included aspersions on Ms Moore's "lipstick, her taste in footwear [leader writer's gentility for the famous 'f*** me shoes'], her cleavage, her manner of speech, her weight, her smoking habits and her hairstyle".

Someone thought that the Greer column had better be shown to Ms Moore before going in. Ms Moore could not be found. The leader explained that the authorities then adopted old Scott's solution to all crises — "a period of reflection". Whereupon Dr Greer resigned. Two days later, the worsening situation necessitated another leader. It disbelieved "Dr Greer's most extraordinary claim . . . that she never intended the original version of her column to be printed".

Future historians may conclude that the Guardian mishandled the crisis. It lost feminism's Grand Old Woman. I would have betrayed Ms Moore. If Dr Greer then denied that she had not intended the column to be printed, I would — by publishing her private memo to me, or something — have betrayed her too.

The May crisis was the only blemish on what was, as this book shows, a good Guardian year. There were, of course, other crises during the period in question. The book covers them in a section called "Making News". There was the matter of Mr Jonathan Aitken, the Paris writs and the "cod fax". The courts are apparently involved here, so I shall say no more than that by forming an alliance between the liberal Guardian and the somewhat non-liberal Mr Mohammed Al Fayed, the then editor was prepared to make himself — as he must have known he was doing — look ridiculous in the eyes of Tory journalists like myself. He thus served the higher, indeed highest, aim of diverting his readers, as well as those of rival papers.

Elsewhere, the book shows that the paper is becoming more and more readable and less and less logical. Almost anything about Mr Blair, for example, both wishes him on the country, and warns the country against him. Good writing should be both logical and readable. But good journalism seldom is. If it is a choice between the two, logic must go.

But then, the Guardian is one of those few publications whose readers expect it to be readable. The brutes have to be thrown their mischief all the time: the readers, I mean, or perhaps I mean the editors.

Frank Johnson is editor of the Spectator

The subtle art of vulgarity

Ian Sansom

The Letters of Dorothy L Sayers, 1899-1936: The Making of a Detective Novelist
ed Barbara Reynolds
Hodder & Stoughton 421pp £25

IN A lecture on "The Importance of Being Vulgar" Dorothy L Sayers once claimed that: "It is, of course, all too easy to be vulgar without being great; it is not nearly so easy to be great without being vulgar." Barbara Reynolds's collection of Sayers's letters makes the truth of this claim embarrassingly clear: Sayers was great, but Sayers was vulgar.

Sayers is of course best known as the author of the Lord Peter Wimsey detective novels, but she was also an enthusiastic translator of Dante, a middling playwright, a poor poet, a great Christian apologist and, as her letters reveal, bold, blowsy and a bit of a big-head. Aged 13, she complained to her cousin, Ivy Shrimpton, that her new governess "does not really know quite enough for the post"; a couple of years later Ivy herself is upbraided for being inclined to form a harsh judgment, which "will spoil your life for you very much".

As well as being capricious and precocious, the saintly Sayers was unusually frank about matters of sex and money (she liked to joke that she kept the L in Dorothy L Sayers because it made up the symbols for pounds, shillings and pence — £.S.D), and perhaps not surprisingly she seems to have been well suited to her job during the 1920s as an advertising copywriter with the firm of S H Benson. At the height of her fame as a novelist, to much controversy, she even cashed in by writing a story for a Horlicks ad, which is a bit like Joanna Trollope writing copy for Harvey's Bristol Cream, or James Kelman advertising scotch.

Not only shameless, Sayers was flirtatious to the point of recklessness: many of her early letters are taken up with describing her teenage crushes, or what she calls "crackations", and she delights in writing home to her parents from Oxford with details of her escapades. Yet she was also remarkably self-possessed: when her hair began to fall out due to illness and stress, she took to wearing a silver wig.

The most revealing letters, though, are those that show Sayers at her most vulnerable, particularly those to John Cournos, a second-rate American novelist, with whom she fell madly in love during the early 1920s. Cournos was an unpleasant and extremely unscrupulous man, and he and Sayers eventually split up because she refused to countenance the use of contraception, which she believed would spoil their relationship with what she called "the taint of the rubber shop".

With characteristic determination and recklessness she then promptly got pregnant by another man, farmed off her son to the care of her cousin, the long-suffering Ivy, married the motoring correspondent for the News of the World, and got down to the serious business of becoming a writer.

Barbara Reynolds is already distinguished as the author of the most sensible and scholarly of the various biographies of Sayers (of which there are several, ranging from the simpering to the salacious).

This first volume of letters goes up to 1936, covering the period of Sayers's novel writing, but before her books on Christianity. C S Lewis thought Sayers one of the great English letter-writers — the evidence for that will come in the second volume covering the years when Sayers produced not only her best work but her most interesting letters.

Cricket Fifth Test: South Africa v England

England's dismal roll-over

Mike Selvey in Cape Town

IN THE end South Africa won at a canter in the afternoon Cape sun. Asked to make only 67 to win after tea, Andrew Hudson (27) and Gary Kirsten (41) made such merry way at another packed Newlands that it was all over in less than 16 overs. The winning boundary, hit by Kirsten off Graeme Hick, sparked a cacophony of celebration.

This win by 10 wickets came after a spirited England fightback, with a fifth-wicket partnership of 72 from Graham Thorpe and Hick taking the tourists into credit. It even threatened to make batting life hard for South Africa as Hick launched an assault on the left-arm spinner Paul Adams, which included two huge straight sixes in a row.

But then Hick fell leg-before to one that kept low from Shaun Pollock, who produced an inspired spell of fast bowling. It gave Pollock the best figures of his brief Test career, five for 32, and South Africa the series: the last six England wickets fell for only 19 runs, the final four in the space of 10 balls, as the tourists were dismissed for 157. It was as if the fight had drained out of England.

So a series that for four matches had plodded along like a coalman's horse finished in a tumble of wickets and a blaze of boundaries — and a controversy over the dismissal of Thorpe.

The left-hander, in his first significant innings of the series, had reached 59 when he played a delivery from the left-arm spinner Paul Adams off his hips to short fine leg and was called for a run by Mike Watkinson. Thorpe was late setting off, and the sharp Hudson made a direct hit on the stumps at the bowler's end with Thorpe struggling to make his ground.

It appeared to be a clear case for the third umpire and his video replay but Dave Orchard, the home umpire, trusted his own judgment and ruled in Thorpe's favour.

What followed was unedifying, quite contrary to the regulations under which Test matches are now played, and a further example of how the television tail is wagging the cricket dog.

The broadcaster's response to the incident was to replay it instantly, which meant it was seen in the many hospitality boxes and bars around the ground. The denizens saw that, far from being home and dry, Thorpe was out by at least a foot. A roar went up, alerting the fielding side, and the South Africa captain Hansie Cronje immediately spoke to Thorpe and Orchard.

Orchard, correctly, took the view that he had made a decision and that was it, right or wrong — and indeed he had committed a double error, by not using the technology on a close line-call and then by making a botch of the decision. Instead of laying down the law to Cronje, however, he was persuaded to consult Steve Randell, the Australian official. As a result of that he called for the replay, which of course showed Thorpe to be out. Orchard then reversed his original decision.

That Orchard made a huge initial error of judgment was obvious. But it goes further at this level, for the International Cricket Council regulations for Test matches, agreed last October, state unequivocally not only that players must not appeal to the umpire to make use of the replay but that to do so constitutes dissent.

In this case, Cronje and others in his side not only implored Orchard to think again but in effect coerced an umpire into reversing a decision. Raymond Illingworth, chairman of England selectors, said he felt the right decision had been made but that the way it came left much to be desired.

England were dismissed for 153 on the first day, Robin Smith being the only batsman to offer any resistance with a gritty 66. In the 20 overs that South Africa were allowed in reply they lost two wickets, including their captain, for 44.

England's spirits were high when they reduced the home side to 171 for nine, but then Dave Richardson and Paul Adams, playing only his second Test, added 73 for the last wicket to the delight of the packed crowd. Adams was out for 29 while Richardson remained unbeaten on 54. South Africa's total of 244, a lead of 91, culled from nowhere, reversed the whole tone of the day. When Atherton, so often the cornerstone of the England side, fell for 10, the tourists were in trouble.

Alec Stewart was caught at first slip off Pollock. Robin Smith, w... added 44 runs with Thorpe, ... caught by another poor Orchard de... cision after pushing forward ... Adams, the ball deflecting from ... front pad and past his glove to t... wicketkeeper. The end came wh... Peter Martin hooked Pollock ... long leg where Adams made ... steepling catch look easy.

Final scoreboard: England, 15... and 157; South Africa, 244 and ... for 0. South Africa won by 10 wic...

Orchard bloomer . . . Hudson's throw hits the stumps but Thorpe survives, only to be outed by the TV replay PHOTO: CLIVE MASON

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Rush hour of glory

IAN RUSH, awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours' List, was on the substitutes' bench for Liverpool's third-round FA Cup match against Rochdale. But within minutes of taking the field, he had fired his team into a five-goal lead — and himself into the record books.

It was Rush's 42nd FA Cup goal and it took him past the competition's all-time top scorer, Denis Law. Stan Collymore continued his recent good form to score a hat-trick as Rochdale were given a 7-0 drubbing.

All the major teams who went into the competition were still there at the end. Holders Everton were held 2-2 by Second Division Stockport while Les Ferdinand got an equaliser deep into injury time against Chelsea to keep Newcastle United's treble dream alive. Sunderland almost caused a major upset against Manchester United at Old Trafford. United were trailing 1-2 until Eric Cantona brought the scores level 10 minutes from time.

Hereford, from the bottom half of the Third Division, were another club that came close to glory. Taking on Tottenham Hotspur, they held their Premiership opponents to a 1-1 draw, despite their captain missing a penalty.

Sheffield United live to fight another day. Dane Whitehouse grabbed an equaliser 11 minutes from time to earn them a replay against Arsenal. Ian Wright was the scorer for the Gunners.

Among the clubs through to the fourth round are Aston Villa, Leeds United, Bolton, Middlesbrough, Coventry, QPR and West Ham. Matches between Manchester City and Leicester, Ipswich, and Blackburn, Stoke and Nottingham Forest, Watford and Wimbledon and Millwall and Oxford ended as draws. *Full results, below right.*

The FA Cup on Saturday followed the Premiership in sweeping away restrictions on European Union players in the wake of the Bosman judgment. Clubs can now field as many EU players as they require.

FOOTBALLERS Bruce Grobbelaar, Hans Segers, John Fashanu and the Malaysian businessman Heng Suan Lim, facing charges concerning match-rigging, were further remanded to appear at a committal hearing at Southampton on March 18.

LIVERPOOL are likely to meet Juventus in the summer in the United States for the first time since the 1985 Heysel Stadium tragedy. The clubs have agreed plans for a friendly match in Boston, possibly on August 11.

PAUL LAKE has lost his long and courageous battle against injury. In one of the most determined efforts to rebuild a sporting career, the Manchester City player had surgery on his knee 14 times in five years. But the forecasts of a 15th operation has finally broken his resolve. Lake, who made his debut for City in 1987 and hit trouble three years later, said: "All I ever wanted to do was pull on the blue shirt of City just one more time."

WARRINGTON Rugby League club's Australian boss, Brian Johnson, quit after his team suffered a record 80-0 humiliation by St Helens in the Regal Trophy semi-final. Johnson was at the club for more than 10 years as player and coach and succeeded Tony Barrow as team boss in 1988. St Helens captain Bobby Goulding, refreshed after a three-match ban, went into the match with 996 points to credit and ended it with a career total of 1,020 after contributing 24 points to the total. The Great Britain scrum-half kicked 12 goals and had a hand in 12 of his side's 14 tries. Records tumbled as the Saints earned the biggest win yet in a Trophy semi-final and also inflicted the heaviest defeat in Warrington's history. In the other semi-final, Wigan humbled Leeds 38-18.

Rush: record-breaker

ALBERTO TOMBA produced another brilliant second run to record his third consecutive slalom victory in the men's Alpine skiing World Cup race at Flachau, Austria, on Sunday. The Italian, fourth going into the second leg, clocked the second-best time of 53sec and a winning combined time of 1 min 41.05sec. Sweden's Kristina Andersson won the first World Cup slalom of her 12-year career at Maribor, Slovenia, with a combined time of 1 min 45.36sec.

SAMANTHA BREWSTER launched another attempt to become the first woman to sail solo east-to-west around the world when she left the Brazilian port of Santos last week. An earlier bid by the lone sailor, who left Southampton aboard the 67ft Heath Insured in late October, was invalidated when her boat sustained considerable damage and she had to make a detour to have it repaired.

MONICA SELES, who has not played tennis since she lost the US Open final to Germany's Steffi Graf four months ago, plans to compete in all four Grand Slam tournaments this year with Wimbledon, the only major event she has never won, as her main target. Seles, in Sydney to take part in this week's New South Wales Championship, said she intends to play a full tournament schedule over the next 12 months, plus appearances in the Olympic Games in Atlanta and the Federation Cup.

A SOPHISTICATED machine which may toll ... death knell for the drug cheats is ex... pected to make its Olympic debut in Atlanta this summer. The £250... high-resolution mass spectrometer will enable experts to detect dr... taken by participants sev... months before they compete.

COUNTY champions Warwickshire have ruled out a move to re-sign Brian Lara after revealing they were close to agreeing terms with South African fast bowler Shaun Pollock. Lara asked to be released from his three-year contract because of exhaustion three months ago but announced on Sunday he... open to offers.

AUSTRALIA'S Michael Lynagh, the greatest points scorer in world rugby — his tally stands at 911 points at Test level — signed a three-year deal on Monday to join the London club Saracens.

Football results

FA CUP: Third Round: Arsenal 1, Sheff Utd 1; Barnsley 0, Oldham 0; Birmingham 1, Wolverhampton 1; Bradford C 0, Bolton 3; Charlton 2, Sheff Wed 0; Chelsea 1, Newcastle 1; Crewe 4, West Brom 3; Crystal Palace 0, Port Vale 0; Derby 2, Leeds 4; Everton 2, Stockport 2; Fulham 1, Shrewsbury 1; Gravesend & N 0, Aston Villa 3; Grimsby 7, Luton 1; Hereford 1, Tottenham 1; Huddersfield 2, Blackpool 1; Ipswich 0, Blackburn 0; Leicester 0, Man City 0; Liverpool 7, Rochdale 0; Man Utd 2, Sunderland 2; Millwall 3, Oxford Utd 3; Norwich 1, Brentford 2; Notts Co 1, Middlesbrough 2; Peterborough 1, Wrexham 0; Plymouth 1, Coventry 3; Reading 3, Gillingham 1; Southampton 3, Portsmouth 0; Stoke 1, Nottm Forest 1; Swindon 2, Woking 0; Tranmere 0, QPR 2; Walsall 1, Wigan 0; Watford 1, Wimbledon 1; West Ham 2, Southend 0.

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE: Second Division: Bournemouth 1, Bristol C 1; Bristol Rvrs 2, Hull 1; Rotherham 2, York 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Crewe (played 22, points 44); 2, Swindon (22-44); 3, Blackpool (22-39).

Third Division: Barnet 1, Preston 0; Bury 4, Doncaster 1; Cambridge Utd 1, Chester 1; Cardiff 0, Leyton Orient 0; Darlington 1, Northampton 2; Hartlepool 1, Scarborough 1; Mansfield ... Exeter 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Chester (2... 43); 2, Gillingham (22-43); 3, Preston (23-4...

TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP: Second round: Ayr 0, Ross County 2; Berwick 3, Annan Ath 3; Caledonian T 3, Livingston 2; Clyde 2, Brechin 2; Deveronvale 0, Keith 0; East Stirling 0, Stenhousemuir 1; Forfar 3, Lossiemouth 1; Montrose 2, Cowdenbeath 1; Queen of South 2, Queen's Park 4; Spartans 0, East Fife 0; Stirling 3, Alloa 1; Whitehill W... 2, Fraserburgh 2.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Celtic 1, Motherwell 0; Falkirk 0, Rangers 4; Partick 0, Hearts 1; Raith 1, Kilmarnock 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Rangers (2... 53); 2, Celtic (20-48); 3, Hibernian (20-30).

First Division: Clydebank 1, Dundee Utd ..., Dundee 2, Hamilton 1; St Johnstone 3, Dumbarton 0; St Mirren 2, Dunfermline 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Dunfermline (19-3...; 2, Dundee Utd (21-37); 3, Dundee (19-3...

Third Division: Arbroath 2, Albion 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Livingston (17-3...; 2, Brechin (18-32); 3, Ross County (18-2...

Football FA Cup third round: Derby County 2 Leeds United 4

Demolition Derby in injury time

Ian Ross

AN ENRAPTURED Baseball Ground crowd rose as one at the final whistle after a lavishly entertaining match. They had seen Leeds claw their way back into a tie that had been slipping away from them to beat Derby with two injury-time goals to earn a fourth-round trip to Bolton.

Although Derby had had to play for almost an hour with 10 men after Gary Rowett's dismissal, the First Division leaders had taken a 2-0 lead early in the second half.

On the previous weekend Leeds had played for 73 minutes against an Everton side reduced to 10 men but had performed ineptly in a comprehensive defeat. That lesson appeared to have been ignored as Derby struck twice in two minutes.

Marco Gabbiadini benefited from a deflection to crash in a rising drive, then Paul Simpson snaked out his leg between the dithering Palmer and the hesitant Beeney to push into an unguarded net. But Derby had peaked too early.

Although Leeds's rank inconsistency must have Howard Wilkinson watching his team from behind knotted hands, he need not have worried himself here. It was a struggle but eventually Derby were subdued, defeated on home soil for the first time since October — when they were eliminated from the Coca-Cola Cup by the same opponents.

Curiously, the goals continued to come in pairs. Sixty-six seconds after Gary Speed had planted a sweet left-foot shot inside the far post, Brian Deane equalised by stabbing in a Dorigo cross which had been helped on its way by Yeboah.

The tie was deep into added time before it was settled. Gary McAllister pushed in the decisive third after Derby had failed to intercept Beeney's huge clearance, then Tony Yeboah cruelly lobbed another.

"My lot will drive me crazy, they'll send me to an early grave," said Wilkinson afterwards. "We are an honest side and today we dug ourselves out of a hole."

Events after the interval were in marked contrast to a first half singularly lacking in appeal, although Derby were dealt two major blows in quick succession. Midway through the half Deane rose smartly and intact from an innocuous collision with Igor Stimac, but Derby's Croatian international did not. The Rams' most complete footballer was lifted on to a stretcher, his hands locked around his right knee.

Eight minutes later Stimac was joined in the dressing room by his fellow defender Rowett, who was sent off after preventing Deane from sprinting clear by using his right arm to pull down the Leeds forward.



Inside job . . . Brian Deane finds the top corner for Leeds United's equaliser PHOTOGRAPH: NEAL SIMPSON

Motor Racing

Ford to back Stewart team

Alan Henry

THE high-profile new partnership between Jackie Stewart's fledgling grand prix team and Ford for the 1997 season was officially announced last week at the Detroit Motor Show.

Stewart Grand Prix, as the team will be titled, have a five-year agreement, believed to be worth £50 million, for the exclusive use of Ford's Formula One engines and will take over supplies of the three-litre Zetec-R V10s when Ford's current contract with the Swiss-based Sauber team expires at the end of this year.

"This announcement will put an end to speculation concerning Ford's commitment to F1," said Stewart. "Ford is committed to raising the level of its involvement in the sport, and that commitment will be for the long term."

Stewart's new operation will be based at premises in Milton Keynes where his son's team, Paul Stewart Racing, already has its headquarters. Stewart junior will be managing director of Stewart Grand Prix and the existing team will wind down its involvement in other single-seater categories at the end of the coming season to concentrate exclusively on F1.

The first Stewart-Ford F1 car is expected to be ready to test by autumn.

Rugby Union Heineken European Cup final

Every which way Toulouse

Robert Armstrong at Cardiff Arms Park

A PENALTY in the last minute of extra time earned the French champions Toulouse a 21-18 victory over Cardiff and the inaugural Heineken European Cup, and a handsome win bonus of £1,200 a man from their grateful club committee. Thomas Castaignède, at 20 the rising star of French rugby, paved the way for a deserved triumph with a try, a drop goal and a vital pass for a touchdown by Jerome Cazalbou.

Tom Kiernan, the former Ireland full-back, presented the seven-kilo silver trophy to the winners. The Welsh champions will be concerned less about passing up the £1,000 each on offer for a win than by their failure to cross the French line in 113 minutes of pulsating football. Their points came from six penalties by the fly-half Adrian Davies, who had only limited opportunities to galvanise his three-quarter line. However, the intense competitive quality of the final offered a fitting climax to a competition that is destined to dominate club rugby in Europe within a season or two.

No doubt the English and the Scots who will enter the event under a revised format next autumn were envious of the live television exposure their Welsh neighbours received from the semi-final stage. Cardiff have certainly won new admirers outside the principality.

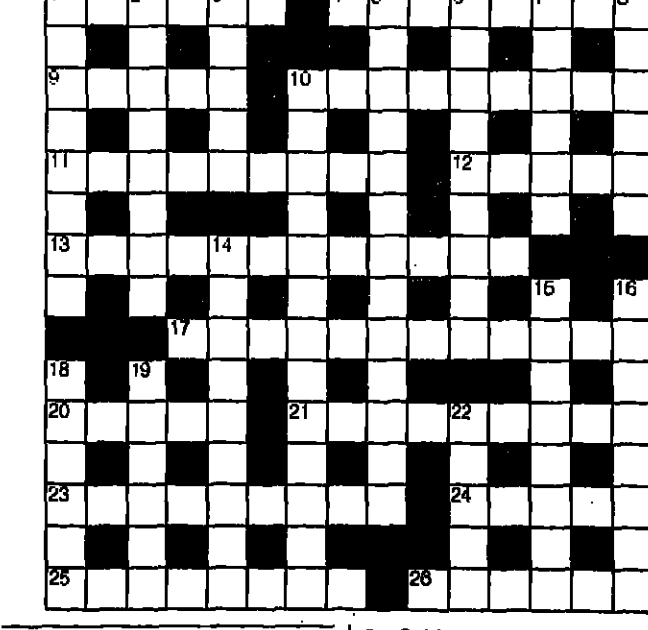
Fears that the final might be ruined as a spectacle by the heavy rainfall over the weekend were quickly dispelled by the French backs, who relished the billiard-table surface the Arms Park groundstaff had prepared. The men of Toulouse, some of whom will be in the France team against England next week, demonstrated a remarkable ability suddenly to open up areas of unmarked space and punish errors with a lightning counter-attack.

Emile Ntamack, the Toulouse captain, welcomed the opportunity his club will have to defend their title in a genuinely pan-European competition next season. "We have won our domestic championship twice in a row so it was more important for us this season to enter Europe and win this event for the first time. We have now made certain by winning that we'll be in the European Cup next season."

It says much for the classic skills of Toulouse that the return of Jonathan Davies, who replaced the centre Mark Ring at half-time, was over-shadowed by the shrewdly judged performances of Deylaud, Castaignède and the rangy full-back Ougier.

The Cardiff pack, though, had plenty to be proud of, maintaining discipline and momentum in face of the traditional French forward blend of the good, the bad and the ugly.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



Across

1,4 Ancient patriarch in rash development by fiery chariot racer? (6,8)
9 Electric company gets a big shock on the Lizard (5)
10 Push-chair, a pet project with an infestation (4,5)
11 Woodwork at the fish gate (9)
12 A month in Spain is a nuisance (5)
13 Talk books? (5,7)
17 Consequences, etc., of Prague morals? (7,5)
20 Beast expressed satisfaction about craving (5)
21 Schism from church during working period? (9)
23 American writer backed in to knock down our leaders (3,6)
24 Author of "Reflections of a Governess"? (5)
25 Under 50% being under 18 (8)
26 Big gun at billiards (6)

Down

1 Called once about firms at great expense (4,4)
2 One who makes notes with pipe (8)
3 Free love comes in to be parted from (5)
5 English colony confused with suburb? That's all right then (3,1,4,5)
6 Composer of "The Martyred Mountain" (5,4)
7 Adriatic merchantman strikes a hopeful note inside (6)
8 Saw the negative principle in loss of tension (6)
10 Hell of a clue for Pi! (10,3)
14 Marsupial, a stunner, in the fashion of a carnivore (5,4)
15 Part I in a short day has "a grievous fault" (8)
16 A boy to call up male voice choir in unison? (2,3,3)
18 Non-vocal beat? (6)
19 Dredge the River Swan? (6)
22 Fishy drawing of 10 down in water (5)

Last week's solution

R	O	A	R	I	N	G	F	O	R	T	I	E	S	
E		P		N		U		F		O		X		
M	E	R	I	T		I	N	F	E	R	I	O	R	
U		O		R		C		I		S		N		M
N	U	N	N	I	S	H		C	H	O	L	E	R	A
E				C		E		E				R		L
R	A	S	T	A		T	E	R	M	A	G	A	N	T
A		T		T						P		T		E
T	R	A	C	E	L	E	S	S		P	R	E	S	S
I		I				G		P		L				E
V	E	R	T	I	G	O		O	N	E	I	R	I	C
E		W		N		T		O		C		E		R
	P	E	R	U	V	I	A	N		A	L	A	M	O
		L		R		S		E		R		L		S
	A	L	P	E	S	M	A	R	I	T	I	M	E	S